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MANUALS OF THE INNER LIFE

IN HIS WILL

BISHOP OF ZANZIBAR

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IN HIS WILL

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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MANUALS OF THE INNER LIFE

IN
HIS WILL

Retreat Addresses

by

FRANK WESTON,

D.D.

Bishop of Zanzibar

London: S.P.C.K.

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THIS Retreat was preached to the Associates of the Community of the Sacred Passion in June, 1914. The Addresses were taken down by one who was present, in longhand, and printed without correction by the preacher. They have now been edited without material change and are published to meet the wishes of several who have the right to lay claims upon the preacher's time.

Seven years have passed since these addresses were given. The preacher has felt, in correcting their language, a strong desire to alter and re-write. But he has felt bound to change nothing except the more evident faults of style.

F. Z.

October, 1921.

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IN HIS WILL

OPENING ADDRESS

THINK of God as Eternal Quiet—the Still One—the Changeless One. Let us offer all our restlessness, our unquiet hearts to Him.

O my God, I am here before Thee, not because I want to be, but because Thou hast called me, not because I can say or do anything good, but because I cannot be satisfied without Thee.

I am nothing : Thou art my God and my All.

O my God, I believe in Thee, Three Persons and One God : Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

I believe that Jesus Christ was made Man and died for me. I believe that Jesus Christ, in His Body and Blood, His Soul and His Divinity is truly Present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

IN HIS WILL

I believe all that Thou hast taught me in Thy Church and by Thy Word ; Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.

O my God, I hope in Thee, because of Thy dear Son's self-abandonment in love for me. I hope in Thee to help me in all my troubles, to forgive me all my sins, to carry me through all temptations, to crush down within me all my passions ; to bring me to that perfection that Thou hast purposed for me, and finally to unite me to Thyself in Heaven at last.

O Lord, in Thee have I trusted : let me never be confounded.

THE MEANING OF RETREAT

We will think to-night about the meaning of a Retreat. There are certain things we ought *to observe*.

1. I have come to God because God wants me. Because I have come at God's call, and because He has put it into my heart to come, I must pay attention to Him and to Him only.

Therefore I must, first of all, keep the rule of Silence. This rule of Silence does not, of course, mean that a person may not ask for the things necessary to be asked for, but it does mean not talking to others in the ordinary sense of the word. In every way we must try to shut out the world from our minds. We keep the rule for God's Glory, we shut out every opportunity of thinking of self, in order that we may give God an opportunity of making Himself heard within us. Every breach of this rule is putting a hindrance in His way.

Secondly, experience has taught us that a breach of this rule of Silence is

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spoiling somebody else's desire to be alone with God, and, therefore, is hard on other people.

Thirdly, it spoils the tone of the Retreat.

2. Since we have come to pay attention to God and God only, it is a good thing to open our hearts to God, to lift our eyes to God, to take our thoughts off self.

You have come here to think of God, and it is right not to think of your horrible self, except so far as you are in sin. If you were in Retreat for a week, it would be a different matter. Then, it would be easy to set a day apart. Now, let us think about God chiefly, though of course all thinking about God involves thinking about self. But the primary object of a Retreat is *to listen* to God, to speak to God and to learn to be alone with God.

Then this, if I may say it. It is a good thing *not to lean* upon anyone. Some people do not think they have made a good Retreat unless they have had a long talk with the Conductor. Some people need it no doubt ; but do bear in mind, and don't mind my saying it, it ought not to be necessary—and only necessary when something is really wrong and needs real

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advice. We want to get the spirit of real devotion. Let us above all things *aim at Communion with God*. Do you see what I mean? I don't want to discourage anybody from what is good and right, only as far as it is possible keep away from yourselves and the Conductor, and be alone with God. If there are little difficulties, a few words with the Conductor may help, but you will understand, and use your own discretion.

That is the primary rule and its interpretation : to attend to God and try to have three days of uninterrupted Communion with God.

To begin the Retreat to-night, there are a few things I want to say which may help, out of which each one may find something helpful, that through the Holy Spirit we may use every moment as well as we can. How shall we spend the introductory hours of the Retreat? Let us take this for our thought to-night and for the early hours of to-morrow up to the time of our Communion.

We begin with this simple truth : I am come to be alone with God. God made me entirely for Himself, and the great crises

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that come in my life, the great sorrows, the great temptations, always bring home to me my utter loneliness. Matters do not really reach a crisis with me unless they throw me back upon myself, unless they make me feel absolutely powerless and lonely. The sting of temptation is in the sense that evil rules me : I am alone ; I may lose my touch of God ! Loneliness ! The sting of bereavement, of great sorrow, is the loneliness of being left behind. And in pain, real pain, the sting is loneliness ; nobody else can quite understand it, nobody else can certainly feel it. And in remorse, it is the loneliness that hurts. The whole secret of life is to learn to be *alone with God*. It is not anything merely sentimental, not merely trying to have a nice feeling that God is near me ; it is the reality of life. The only thing that saves us from the sting of temptation, from the sorrow that is almost intolerable, from the pain turning into bitterness—the ultimate thing and the only thing that is so real that it can help then, is the touch of the Presence of God, for then *I know I am not alone*. God made me in order that there should be God and

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myself in active union, in active partnership. I know I don't live my life like that, so I come into Retreat and for three days I am going to be alone with God—God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

I shall be alone with the Eternal Father, the Creator, alone with Creative Love, Who made me for Himself, and He will speak to me, speak to me surely above all else of the motive Power that is in my heart.

He wants to be alone with me, and as He draws near to me, He would embrace me in His Love, but He finds in me something that is not Himself. He finds something in my heart which is not clean, that is different from Him, which makes it impossible for Him to be alone with me. And He speaks to me of a purity of motive, of a purity of heart that keeps out anything from me that is not God. And I *do* want Him to speak in these three days of that to me. These are not to be three days spent in bewailing the very natural proof that none of us live with pure single motive of heart. Nor do we want to spend three days in thinking of the mixed character of our motives. Let them be

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spent alone with the Father that He may inspire us with purity of heart. He will shew us the meaning of a single heart, give us a vision that may carry us through the future, give us joy and hopefulness and a certainty that, little by little, in the measure of our perseverance we shall one day come out with purity of goodness and singleness of heart. That is what I want to listen about to-night—*alone* with my Father.

“ If I be a Father where is Mine Honour ? ”

“ Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee.”

“ Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.”

“ I shall give unto them Eternal Life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My Hand.”

“ If a man love Me he will keep My Words, and My Father will love Him, and we will come unto Him and make our abode with Him.”

The whole vision opens out at the beginning of a Retreat of the possibility of a life lived alone with Eternal Love.

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Then again I go into Retreat to be alone in the atmosphere created by the Holy Ghost the Spirit of God, Who filleth all things. The whole world is indwelt by the Spirit Who created it. Each human being is a potential temple of the Holy Spirit. Each ordinary human life, a sinful human life, has the possibility of living in the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit Who fills it, and would order it sweetly according to the Eternal Wisdom. We are going to spend three days out of the atmosphere of the world ; we will put it behind us, and for three whole days simply dwell in the atmosphere that He alone can make—the Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Ghost. How we have failed, haven't we ? Every time we have been called by God to say our prayers, to make our meditation, to devotional reading of the Bible, or do some act of devotion, we have had a definite chance, an opportunity to respond to the Holy Spirit, Who was trying to extend His atmosphere over our hearts. O, how we've failed !

Yet we are not here to sum up our failures, but to listen in hopefulness while He shews us the Vision once more—the

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old vision of possibilities, the vision of a recollected life, the vision of an indwelt life. We shall go back to our homes carrying a new atmosphere of peace, a quiet power, a recollectedness that belongs to those who know that within them dwells the Eternal Power, the Spirit of God Who is the ultimate Force in the Universe.

Thirdly. I am going to be alone with Jesus. And at the beginning of our three days it is well for us to count the cost of being alone with Jesus.

Think, in any spare time you may have, of those who on earth were alone with Jesus. Think what it meant to His Apostles. They were most near to Him. Think of their personal union with Jesus. Think what it meant to S. Peter. S. Peter was alone with Jesus several times. Think of his loneliness when our Lord turned and looked upon him ; or when flying from Rome he met his Lord on the road, and said to Him "Whither goest Thou, Lord ?" Our Lord replied : "I go to Rome to be crucified again in thy place." Or think of the loneliness of S. John. Often he was alone with Jesus. Think

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how that blessed time in which he lay on Jesus' Bosom meant years and years of weary work and waiting. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Count up what it means to be alone with Jesus. Count the cost of being alone three days with Jesus.

We must come into Retreat really and truly expecting that we are going to be, each one of us, for three days, in a way that perhaps we have never been before, in personal touch with the Living Jesus Who was crucified for us. In our Communion we lay our very hands, through the Veil of Sacrament, upon the Humanity born of Mary and crucified under Pontius Pilate. The very same Jesus Who said to James and John the sons of Zebedee:—"Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"—that very same Jesus wishes to be alone with you and me for three days and we cannot go out of Retreat unchanged. It means finding the personal relationship that the Blessed Jesus is willing to reveal to each one of us, according to our desire and according to our readiness to respond. "Ye shall indeed

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drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized."

That is only one side. There is the other side : the side of intimate friendship with Jesus ; there is the side of faithful and loving confidence in Jesus, the side of realization of vocation, of humble and utterly weak response to Jesus, but a response accepted and empowered by Him.

We mustn't fail Him, then, in these three days. He has much to tell us about our relationship with Him, about our conversion to Him. As the years go on, and as the time draws nearer when we shall see Him face to face, He is wonderfully kind in making us conscious of the feebleness of our conversion, and it is in Retreat He takes us, not one, but perhaps many steps further along the road. It is in Retreat, alone with Jesus, that we are able to see through the system of religion to a Person in Whom the whole system hangs together. It is alone with Jesus in Retreat that we see behind the sacramental system of the Church and get into personal communion with a Person. It

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is in Retreat, alone with Jesus, that vocation comes home to us, and, however far we've got, we must entirely begin all over again to try and have a closer personal union with Him, as if there were nothing in the universe but Jesus and ourselves. What a wonderful prize He offers us—three days of prayer !

But you must not, whatever happens, try to force the Hand of Jesus in Retreat. You must not worry. Look away from yourselves to God. Have no theory as to how God will deal with you ; have no sort of expectation in your mind as to what you are going to do or receive. Leave everything entirely to God, and in all simplicity, like little children, come round your Father when He calls you ; wait upon Him in all simplicity, in quiet penitence, in humble confidence ; come to your Saviour as He holds out His Arms to you.

Don't try to force your feelings.

Don't be impatient.

Don't worry about your feelings.

Don't expect anything.

Don't desire anything but that the Will of Jesus may be accomplished in you. Pray that these three days of waiting upon

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God may be spent entirely according to His Will ; that you may wish for nothing, desire nothing, but what He wills to give you. Cast feelings from you ; those who cling hard haven't time to be self-conscious. Don't watch yourselves as you pray—watch Jesus.

And just this last word. Will you take these two words as warnings ?

In Retreat we must be *humble* and *hopeful*. Humble, because humility is an act by which we place ourselves in our right position before God ; it is a habit by which we think of ourselves as in our right place before God. So we must be very humble—humble about the past, humble about the present and as we think of the future.

And be hopeful, because hope is not only a duty, it is worship. To be hopeful is to give God His rightful place in your life. In spite of anything that is gone before, in spite of anything now, be entirely hopeful of your future relation to God, perfectly hopeful because you put God in His right place.

God comes to you and to me. We are going to be alone with God, with Creative

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Love, the Spirit Who made me, Who makes from day to day the atmosphere in which union with God is possible. Jesus, the Finger of God, is touching, drawing, keeping me in perfect union with God. And I am humble above all things, and yet perfectly hopeful, because "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

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I

LET us contemplate our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of the Will of God—living in the Garden, surrounded by all the pleasures which the good Will of God had provided for them—the Supreme Gift of Union with God's Will before their eyes—the Tree of Life.

Let us contemplate our first Parents defying the Will of God—rejecting God's Will—driven out of the Garden—separated from God. And Satan said, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of it and the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die ye shall be as gods."

Let us contemplate our Mother Mary in her perfect acceptance of the Will of God : "And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son and shalt call His Name Jesus. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy Word"—she yielded

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herself to the Authority of her God :
“ Behold the handmaid of the Lord.”

Let us contemplate the perfect revelation of God's Will on earth, in the Garden of Gethsemane : “ And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing remove this cup from me : nevertheless not My Will, but Thine be done. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

O my God, I believe in Thee. I believe Thou hast made me for Thyself. I believe that outside Thee there is neither life nor happiness. I confess before Thee my unworthy service, my many sins. O my God, I bless Thee for the Blood of Jesus, for the hope of sanctification, for all the gifts of Grace. O my God, I give myself to Thee. Send me the Holy Spirit, teach me to surrender myself to Thee. I want to be Thine, Thine only, Thine for ever. Hear me, O my God, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

THE WILL OF GOD

The Will of God is not a thing, not a theory, not an explanation of things that have happened — the Will of God is personal. I cannot in my thoughts separate God from the Will of God. The Will of God is God Himself, and as far as I know it, the Will of God is revealed in Jesus—
“God Who in sundry times hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by Whom also He made the world the brightness of His Glory and the express Image of His Person.”

When I talk about the Will of God as being active in the world, when I talk of surrendering my will to the Will of God, or about disobeying the Will of God, I mean just this one thing : I mean the Eternal God Himself and the Eternal God revealed to me in Christ Jesus my Lord.
“My God and my All”—doesn't that sum it all up? I must not think of the Will of God as though it were something

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with which I could make a bargain, as though it were some great law much mightier than human laws, and yet in the last resort something that can be altered. I want to learn not to think of the Will of God as something separate from Him. I want always to gaze upon Him Whose very Being and Whose actions shew me His Will—*God Who is my Will.*

From all eternity God's Will is expressed in the Person of His Son, in Whom He is eternally satisfied. That is why the Son is called "the Image of God's Person." Here, of course, we are in the region of things that human language cannot explain. We are in the region of things of which we only get an understanding in mystical union with the only-begotten Son of God.

The Eternal Father reproduces Himself in His Son from all eternity : "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God." The Father in His Eternal Love reproduces Himself and contemplates Himself in His Son, the Son being the very image of the Father. So we speak in our foolish words, in our

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very feeble inadequate words. There is the mystery that we contemplate in our prayers.

He is called the Eternal Word, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father, because He is the mirror to the Father's Mind. The Father's Mind is reproduced in the Mind of the Eternal Son ; He is the Eternal Word, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father. In the moment of creation it is He Who makes known the Eternal Mind of the Father, it is He Who gives form to all the thoughts of the Eternal Father : " By Him all things were made, and without Him was not anything made that was made." It is the Eternal Son, the Eternal Wisdom, the Eternal Word Who upholds all things by the Word of His Power from the beginning of creation down to this present time. From all eternity the Will of God includes creation. And the Will of God, which orders the gradual growth and development of all that is in the world, is expressed to us, is made known to us, in the Eternal Person Whom we call God's Son.

And therefore it is that in the great work of re-creation or redemption, God's Messenger was not a created being, nor chosen

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from the Angels—God's Messenger is the Eternal Person, the Eternal Word, the Eternal Wisdom Himself. It is the Son Whom He sends and through Whom He speaks, and of Whom He asks the great surrender.

Now that is a difficult point on which to meditate. We hear the world speaking of God's Providence, and we ourselves have got into habits of talking of the Will of God much on the same lines as we talk about the will of men. We mean well, but we need to be careful. In Retreat we must get down to the bed rock, and understand that there is no Will of God apart from the living personal God Himself, and no conceivable way of altering God's moral will unless you can alter God's Person.

Realize the one thing that matters is my *union with God*, Who is Will and purpose, in Whom Will and purpose are absolutely one with His own Life. It narrows down, does it not?—it narrows down all possibilities of bargaining with God, or arguing with God about His Will. It brings us down to this, that to meet God and to love God and to be at one with God must mean to the creature absolute surrender of will ; just

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as the Eternal Word Himself, the Son, has nothing of His own, but only what He receives from the Father ; He has nothing but what the Father gives, and He gives it all back, He surrenders all.

What a vocation for us ! Do you wonder that in the history of the Church men and women have adopted what to us sometimes seem hard and unnatural ways of finding union with God ? Is it wonderful, if that be the reality that lies behind it ? Do you wonder at the hardness, the bitterness of death, when death is the last discipline of life to prepare us for union with a God like that ? And does not our own pettiness, our self-assertiveness, seem intolerable as we contemplate the Eternal Will, the Eternal Purpose Who is the Living God ?

Secondly, let us meditate in this way : that the Will of God, Who is God, is made intelligible to you and me in Jesus the Son of Mary. There came a moment in time, a moment in which God, as it were, made Himself subject to time. There was the moment in the Eternal Union of the Father with the Word when the Father's requirement and the Father's claim called forth from the Eternal Word " Lo, I come to do

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Thy Will, O God.” That, in human language which we can understand, is the translation of the mysterious movement within the Godhead by which the Eternal Word surrenders Himself, once and for all, that He might come forth and take flesh and live and die on earth. “ Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God ”—and in that promise, in that pledge, the Eternal Word accepts Manhood and the limitations of Manhood and all that Manhood must mean. He accepts it once and for all, never to draw back, never to change, but through all Eternity to bear Manhood at God’s right Hand, and make intelligible to you and me the Eternal Will of God. How shall we think of it ?

Let us consider it from three points of view. This morning we will think of the Lord Jesus as God’s Will revealed to us in human life. This afternoon we will think of the Divine Will as the ground of our penitence. And to-night we must face our choice between Christ’s Will and our own.

JESUS WHO IS GOD'S WILL REVEALED

First. Think of how in the Life of Jesus His human will was developed from stage to stage, that it might become the perfect expression of God's Will. We can contemplate Him at His Mother's knee. The Babe on Mary's knee is none other than the Eternal God, and yet in so far as He is the Babe, in so far as He is Incarnate, He leads the life of perfect self-surrender in the terms of Babyhood. That is the beginning, and as years pass on, we find Him as a boy of twelve conscious of the purpose of His Father, conscious of a peculiar relation to His Father, accepting another eighteen years of human discipline and human trial in His own home. He endures it. He reaches a higher level of human service in His Baptism, accepts three years' ministry, committing Himself to His Father, going out to experience for Himself all that that ministry will mean. He makes an act of self-committal, an act of self-surrender

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in response to the coming of the Holy Ghost upon His Manhood, and during those three years He learns obedience by the things that He suffers. And then, on the highest level, on the level of the Passion, we find the Eternal Word Incarnate abandoning Himself and all that He is and all that He has to the Father's Glory. Stage by stage the Eternal Will unfolds Himself in language we can understand. All nature manifests God's purpose to man. To that the Eternal Will submits Himself at every turn. All things to which He submits Himself become uplifted, sanctified, redeemed, and acceptable at the price of Blood. So from stage to stage the Eternal Will becomes intelligible, visible, and Jesus remains the perfect expression of human life.

Or again, meditate this way. Meditate upon the self-surrender which lives behind the Incarnate Life : " Lo, I come to do Thy Will." Meditate upon the gradual experience of all that that involved.

I think that one of the most striking things in the whole story of the life of Jesus is the way in which He submits Himself to the inevitable in human life. I

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see Jesus, I see the Eternal Word on the brink of His Incarnation, giving Himself to the Father—"Lo, I come to do Thy Will." A little later I see Him as an innocent child in Mary's arms and I know that it is only the beginning. From that moment until He leaves the earth, He faces whatever is inevitable to human beings in this world of sin, He will accept whatever shall prove to be inevitable to a perfect man living amongst sinners.

And at any moment of the Life of Jesus we can see Him with His Head bowed before the storm of rebellion and rejection, His Heart always uplifted, filled with a certain glory, and with confidence in His Father's Will. We see the Image of the personal Will of God moving through this world of sin, bearing on His way, gently yet firmly, through the whole mob of sinful wills, keeping His way undismayed. And as the mob takes arms to slay Him, we see the Eternal Will bending to the storm, not resisting, not refusing. And so, accepting everything, He develops His Soul and becomes the perfect expression of trust and confidence. Until in the last moment of His Life, as He bows His Head to the final

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storm, the cry is " Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

Meditate on the inevitable, and on Jesus committing Himself to it once and for all. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

That is the Glory of the Life of Jesus ! It is the Glory of His Life that, while bowing to the inevitable, He lived free from the fetters of earth in a life of true liberty. He enjoyed the freedom of the Son of God. Independent of everything except the Father, He recognized no limit to His actions but the Will of the Father with Whom He was one. That is the Glory of Jesus. I want to get it fixed in my mind once for all, deeper than ever, that Jesus, Whose Name is ever on my lips, is the *Will of God*. God does not send me a prophet to remind me of His wishes, He does not send me a judge to condemn me for failing to carry out His wishes ; He sends me One Who comes to me with outstretched arms to draw me right into His Heart, and that One is the Son of God Himself. To kiss the Feet of Jesus is to be one with the Will of God. To quarrel with and to reject the Will of God is with-

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out doubt to treat Jesus harshly. To turn in fear from Jesus is to refuse to give to God that confidence in His Will He has the right to expect.

Well then, what shall we meditate about for ourselves? In what way shall we pray that we may come closer to Him? We might think of ourselves and our conversion. What do we mean by being converted? Surely it means an act of self-committal. What I look back upon as my first conversion is my first conscious act of coming to Jesus, my first conscious act of committing myself once and for all to Jesus, that with Him I might move through life facing what inevitably would prove to me to be temptation, pain, or suffering. And therefore reconversion is normal in my life, because over and over again Jesus calls upon me to make some new act of self-committal. The Christian life is not on a dead level. The Christian life from one aspect is as it were a system of terraces and Jesus lifts me on to each terrace in turn. He draws me as it were up the steps as I make a committal of myself to Him. We cross together a terrace, and the question comes: Have I the confidence to

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follow Him up another flight of steps ? He accepts from me a free act of self-committal, and He takes me up upon a higher level. So from terrace to terrace I follow Him, till in His mercy He brings me to the unveiled Vision of the Eternal Glory. Isn't that it ? Am I able to come to Jesus, to trust Him ? So much of life depends upon committing myself to Jesus and trusting Jesus at the right moment when the call comes. Am I converted ? Are my ears open to Jesus ? When I know that He is asking me to commit myself to Him that He may lead me a little bit higher, am I ready to trust Him ? We aren't very trustful people, are we ? We look back over the past and we see things that make us doubtful as to whether it is any good offering to go with Jesus any further. Like the fools that we are, we look into the future, and in our vision we see difficulties round which we perceive no way to pass. We think it is dangerous and rash to trust Jesus. Whereas the only thing that ought to matter to you and to me in any moment of our life is, that we look up to Jesus ! We see the present before our eyes, and the Lord of all that is past and

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the Lord of all that is to come, Jesus, forbids us to worry over the past or to be anxious over the future. Jesus, Who is in literal fact God's Will manifested to my eyes, God's power and God's love, is waiting to embrace me, and my business is, at each moment in the present, to commit myself, to surrender myself, and not to care in the least what comes afterwards.

Or again, for ourselves it would be a good thing that we should consider this with Jesus : *the consecration of our circumstances*. I wonder if you follow me when I say that so many of us need to learn to pray to God in spite of the circumstances in which God puts us ? We wish to make for ourselves circumstances in which *we think* we could pray—we look upon our difficulties, troubles and trials as real hindrances to prayer—we imagine that it must be God's Will that we should escape from them in order that we may be able to pray ! So we divide our lives into the spiritual on one side, and what we call the outward circumstances on the other side ; and there we go wrong. Because it is in the consecration of all the circumstances

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of our present life that our chance of fulfilling God's vocation lies. It is so important to remember that God is not only redeeming you and me : He is redeeming through you and through me the circumstances in which we live. We must imitate Blessed Jesus Himself. To live in union with Jesus, Who is the Eternal Son Incarnate, and therefore to be perfectly certain that we are fulfilling the Will of God, we must face our circumstances, our present circumstances, as part of the inevitable work, the inevitable lot that it is God's Will we should endure. Therefore the home life and the claims of our relations are of paramount importance—apart from any special vocation. Of course if there is a special vocation and it is genuine, it is easily proved—but it always seems to me that there is a great temptation to Christians to think that special vocations exist just because their present circumstances are hard and difficult. Any movement of Jesus in the soul is supposed to mean a call to something new and separate, whereas He probably means it as a warning against the shallowness of our relation towards our present circumstances.

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The whole life of prayer for us who have to live in the world, the whole meaning of prayer, primarily, is the consecration of our circumstances, the redemption of the spheres in which God has put us, the creation of the atmosphere in which the Will of God can be manifested and in which Jesus can work. So let us in Retreat, lifting up our hearts to Jesus, not repining over the past, gladly go forward hand in hand with Him to redeem our present circumstances.

It is absolute nonsense to say that pious people and the people that live nearest to Jesus are generally misunderstood in the world—it is a deceit of the devil. It is our own fault over and over again that life is hard, and when it is not our own fault we fall back upon the certainty that we shall be helped and that we share the temptation and the work of Jesus. Even He had to face difficulties in His home life with His step-brothers—those sons of Joseph by his first wife. He had to face those difficulties, and to redeem them, as also to redeem His brothers. So we have our difficulties to face and to redeem. Just as the ordinary work and ordinary claims of home life, and

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the ordinary trials and troubles of life in the world, are a struggle, just as all these things are real to us, so Jesus Himself faced them—Jesus the Carpenter of Nazareth. Thus in our circumstances we meet Jesus face to face and seeing in Him the Will of God revealed, we find in Him our power of consecration. We must not try to run away from them, nor must we be in any sense despairing about them. They are inevitable. Lift up your hearts and bow your heads to the inevitable, and for God's sake don't run away from your circumstances.

Think finally of this : *The Inner Union with Jesus, the Inner Union with the Divine Will in Jesus.* In Retreat we have to pull ourselves together in the presence of our Lord. What is the Will of God for you and for me ? I answer to myself, The Will of God is in the living Jesus. How then does the Will of God touch me ? And I answer to myself, The living Jesus comes to me in certain well-defined ways. He comes to me in sacrament, He comes to me in prayer ; and sacrament and prayer will one day become one in perfect mystic union, which will mean the Beatific Vision.

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What then is the Will of God for me? I go out to meet the Will of God, and I meet it in sacrament, in absolution and communion. That chiefly. If it is true that communion *is Jesus*, then communion is the living link between me and the Eternal Will, it is the meat and power in the strength of which I can fulfil His Will. If it is true that absolution *is Jesus*—it is Jesus pardoning, it is Jesus giving power—then to neglect absolution or in any way to refuse to receive absolution is to run enormous risks of wounding the Heart of Jesus.

And in Retreat we ought to think how we meet the personal Will of God Who comes in sacrament. Think of our communions and of our absolutions, of our confessions. Of course in a Retreat of this size there are sure to be some who still hold back from making confession. Think not of yourself, nor of the difficulty of confession, nor of the storm of controversy about confession, but of Jesus the incarnate Word of God. Is it God's will that you should make confession? Look up and ask Him. Is it His will? What does it mean, the Sacrament of Penance? It is

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one of the many ways in which Jesus, the Eternal Will, touches the soul. Is there room for argument? Is there reason for holding back?

Then think of prayer, our meeting with Jesus in prayer. And in Retreat let us review a little our methods of prayer. The fundamental thing for every soul living in this world is this: that in whatever method we pray, in whatever way we are helping others to pray, we should always aim at a power of speaking to Jesus in our hearts, of listening to Jesus, that is ultimately independent of words. If we meditate in fixed forms with the help of books, let the meditations be only helps towards real communion with Jesus—heart to heart, and if possible with no words at all. If you pray by making great acts of faith, hope and love, let them also aim indirectly to the leading up to real silent prayer, a waiting upon Jesus—the realization simply of the Presence of the Eternal Will, Who is shewn to us in Jesus our Saviour.

Ultimately, if this be the aim of each one, then in whatever isolation from other people we may be, in our hearts we shall

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be in real Union with Jesus Himself. That is prayer. “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy Will”—“Not my Will, but Thine be done.”

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II

LET us contemplate our first parents being driven out of the Garden of God's Will : " The Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the Tree of Life "—driven out of the Garden of the Will of God to spend his life with the things his will had put before God's Will. Sin put him outside God's Will.

Let us contemplate the Incarnate Word restoring us into union with the Divine Will—"Come unto Me all ye that are heavy laden and I will refresh you." "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

O my God, I pray Thee to have mercy upon me. I confess before Thee all my

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rebelliousness, my utter faint-heartedness, my daily failure. O my God, I put all my hope in Thee. For love of me Thou hast created me. Thou didst not count the Blood of Jesus too big a price to pay for my redemption. My God, I hope in Thee. Grant me sufficient penitence, break my hard heart, and in all times of darkness and temptation grant me to see Thee and hear the Voice of Thy dear Son. Hear me, O my Father, for the same Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THE DIVINE WILL AS IT IS THE GROUND OF OUR PENITENCE

The incarnate Will shewn to us in Jesus, Son of Mary, is the Divine Will to save. It is the Divine Will moving out to get into closer touch with His children. It is the Divine Will opening the door of the Divine Heart to all who will come in. It is true that in the Old Testament we are continually brought face to face with sentences of judgment, but we understand that all the judgment of which the Old Testament is so full is meant chiefly to prepare for a revelation of Love and Mercy and of Pity. In the New Testament, always, the Divine Will is to save, to forgive and to set men free from sin and to give men the power of forsaking sin. And it is on that that we should dwell first : " God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Do we, in our religious life, really begin with the certainty of the Divine Will to

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save us ? Do we begin with the certainty of the Divine power to carry us through temptation ? Are we not inclined to think of God as a little bit apart from us and to think of ourselves as those who have gone out on a long search to look for God ? We are convinced that if we had more opportunities, and a little more grace, we should do better. Aren't we too often convinced that if God would do a little bit more for us we could become like Saints ? This is all entirely wrong, and it leads us into all kinds of despair and despondency ; it leads us into all kinds of difficulties with the people with whom we live, with those we love and work for, and for whom we pray.

The Divine Will is above all things a Will to grip men—a Will to hold men and to walk hand in hand with men through all that shall come upon them. Whatever may be true of my life this at least is true, that God from the very beginning has always been close to me, knocking at the door of my heart ; that abundant Grace has always been ready to my hand ; and that what God wants is that I should co-operate with Him in fighting against sin. For is it not true that the Incarnation, the coming of

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our Lord into flesh through the obedience of Mary, is above everything a proof of God's entire desire that men should co-operate with Him? God looks upon the human race, not as something entirely unworthy, not as something to be beaten down under His Feet, but as always possessing high possibilities in spite of centuries of rebellion. He trusts the human race to come to its right mind, and will not move a step without man's co-operation. Therefore we are to honour above all Mary the Mother. She was the first to understand the reality of the Fatherhood of God. It is Mary who, helped by the Angel, came to a clear understanding of how men are to stand with God against sin. What a difference it makes to you and me.

In politics in the old days the conquered race went under ; in our times we at once admit them into the fullest self-government, side by side with ourselves. That is a picture of what God has done with the human race. We need to get this home into our hearts. We need to remember it next time we have a dark hour. We must not complain and whine, but recognize the unspeakable honour God

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has done to us. He whom God honours suffers with God.

Secondly. The Incarnate Word is of one Manhood with the rebel. God became Man because man had rebelled against God. Nobody has ever found an adequate answer to the question, Why did God become Man? but there are certain things which stand out from the many answers that have been given. And first, we may safely answer this : God became Man in order that He might claim a natural right to act for man.

I sit here a sinner, and I lift up my heart to God, and God reminds me that such was my sin, and such was His Love, that he actually became Man in order to be able to act and to speak in my name and for me : “ The Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Doesn’t it take all pride, all self-conceit out of one’s penitence, does it not crush us down to the ground, when we remember that whatever our own opinion of ourselves may be, and whatever other people in their generosity may think of us, it is eternally true, *that we are so sinful that the Incarnate Word took our Manhood in*

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order to act for us ? What did it cost Him ? Take into your hand your Crucifix—that teaches you, doesn't it ? “The Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood ? ”

Or again, we may certainly say this is true, that the Incarnate Word took our Manhood in order to offer to the Father the obedience that mankind had never offered, or could have offered. The Gospel is a story of thirty-three years of perfect obedience, perfect detailed obedience. It is the life of One Who never said a word that was not a perfect word, Who never did a deed that was not a perfect deed ; perfect in this sense, that it exactly fulfilled the desire and Will of the Eternal Father ; perfect in this sense, that in fulfilling the Will of the Eternal Father the cost was never counted. The obedience of Jesus, in every moment of His life, just exactly covered the disobedience of the human race. If we meditate upon it on the broad lines of general loyalty to His Father, the general complete obedience covered and obliterated the general disobedience and rebellion of the race ; or if we think of the detailed obedience of

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Jesus it is in a special sense an offering for detailed disobedience.

Lift up your eyes to Calvary and there you have it all before you in symbol. There is the human race typified in Jew and Gentile, all engaged in crucifying Jesus—their disobedience consummated on the Cross : and there upon the Cross is the one obedient Man. Think of the acts of any particular class of sinners who annoy you, or of sins that trouble you in your conscience, and you will find in the Life or the Passion of Jesus, some particular suffering, some particular offering, some particular obedience that in a mysterious way stands out as an offering in reparation for those sins. For Jesus gave to the Father for us what we would not give of ourselves. It is true of you and of me, that the particular sins which are ours are covered by something in the sacred Passion of Jesus.

If you watch the development of the Religious Life of the Church, in the rule of life, you will find that the Founders of all the big Orders seemed to be possessed by special desires to offer reparation to God for this sin or for that. Each Order,

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in so far as it differs and is separate from another Order, owes that different spirit to the Founder or co-Founders who seemed in some particular way to have been attracted by God to make obedience and offerings for some particular kind of sin. This is true of them because it is true of Him Who is their great Exemplar, in Whose Heart is summed up all that will be offered in reparation down the ages by one religious body or other. What we have to understand for ourselves is, that we were of such a kind that it was necessary for Jesus to make reparation for you and me, that He actually gave obedience in the kind of circumstances in which we are to-day and in which we are offering disobedience.

And then, it is good to meditate on this. When Jesus took our flesh and became one of us, He did it in order to pay our debt. It is not fashionable nowadays to dwell upon the debt Jesus paid, because when you think of the debt He paid, you have to think of His death, and of His actual death in some way satisfying the claim that God had on the human race. This is unpopular with modern theology. Yet

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we must thank God for it in Retreat. God so made me that I live under a spiritual law, the effect of which is, that if I sin, I die in soul and body. When He made me under that law and saw me drawing towards destruction, then, looking upon me with love, He sent His only-begotten Son to take my manhood, to be made under that same law. The law of sin is actual suicide in soul and body. Without any action of God the sinner kills himself. Jesus took that manhood, lived under that law, knowing no sin, making Himself one with me. He came under the penalty of my sin deliberately, of His own choice, making Himself mine, my own Brother, that He might carry my guilt in the sight of God. He passed under the law, and, in obedience to the law, death overtook Him—death of body, and then that darkness of soul that was nearly death, and which to anyone but Him, Who is the Eternal Son of God, would have been actual death of the soul : “ My God ! My God ! why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ” And I know that in the darkness He did pay for me a debt to natural law ; and had He not paid it, never could I have

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returned to the God Who loves me, and Who desires me.

Now let us lift up our hearts, let us rejoice with a strong, robust, spiritual joy. He looks down to you this afternoon from His Throne in Heaven. He shows you His Wounds, He pierces your hearts with a sense of the sin that made Him die, but you daren't look away, you daren't look down, you daren't look inwards ; darkness has no place, despair is ruled out. Jesus is loving, Jesus is looking at you, and looking up to Him, you must move out in glad response, taking His message as one of real joy and new hope. " If God be for me, who shall be against me ? " Isn't that what we need ? And so, fortified with joy and hopefulness, we go on to meditate upon the nature of our sins. We must do it, but only in this spirit of joyful hope.

Sin is a personal matter between myself and Jesus. There is very little hope of our being set free from our sins, until we come to that conclusion. Thus we must be finding new sins revealed to us as the years go on. We need not be surprised or disheartened that little by little, as

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grace is given, God makes us see that small things, which we thought had nothing to do with Jesus, have, in fact, a great deal to do with Him ; sins we had not noticed before and which put us out of personal touch with Jesus.

Sin is a personal matter, but why ? What is the essential truth about sin ? If it is true that the Will of God is the moral law, and that the Will of God is incarnate in Jesus, then, any the least sin is really and truly an effort on our part to do without Jesus, and so to drive Jesus out of the world. You know some people think that there is an air of unreality about those who preach the Cross as a symbol of the rejection of God. They tell us that of course people didn't really understand that in crucifying Jesus they were driving out God. But that is not true. It really in fact is the perfect symbol of rejection, because holiness and goodness are primarily the qualities of the personal God. He who fights against goodness and holiness is really fighting against Jesus the Son of Mary ; and whenever I sin, I am, without any exaggeration, classing myself with Pilate, I am over against the Lord

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Jesus. If I am logically developing my self-will, if I am logically proceeding in my self-assertion, the Lord Jesus has no room in my life.

Well, then, if everybody takes that line, it becomes clear that the Lord Jesus has no room in the whole universe. Sin is the negation of Jesus. Sin is the real assertion of the human self as against Jesus, and its logical conclusion is to drive Jesus out. Now I understand why, after going on for some hours indulging in some mood, shall we say, which Jesus has forbidden me, I constantly find that I cannot pray. Of course I cannot, because I have been asserting my own will as one person against the Other Person, and the Other Person has been driven out. He does not strive, He does not use force. Not that I am to think He deserts me. He is there, in the background, waiting for the least motion on my part to call Him in. But I have driven Him out by self-will. We who in some ways are protected by God's Providence from many a big temptation, we who probably have lesser anxieties than many people in the world, we who live sheltered lives, do we sh w less self-will

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than others? Is it not true, and don't we confess it with shame, that Christian people, Communicants, earnest Communicants, devout workers, devoted disciples of Jesus, on inspection prove to keep, somewhere in their lives, little spheres marked off within which they will brook no interference from anybody, little spheres into which Jesus cannot enter? We have our own relationships in which we serve Jesus as well as we can, and we have relationships with people which the Hand of Jesus never touches or sanctifies because they are relationships based entirely on self-will—the negation of the claims of Jesus.

Again, there is this about sin, and it is this that I would above all things realize and fully believe if I could, that my sin is a personal injury done to Jesus. In order that I should know good from evil God has clothed goodness in human form, and sent goodness in human form to dwell with me. He has given me goodness, not only in human form but in sacrament. Jesus the Eternal Good One would dwell in me, in my heart. Thus I know that sin, big or little, is a personal injury that I do to Jesus, to God. "Father, forgive them,

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for they know not what they do.” Only in very small measure can that be true of me. I can’t say it, because I have known and believe that He came forth from God. I know and believe that He dwells in me. I know that the moment will come some day—it may be near—it may be far off—when I shall see Him face to face. I know that in the moment that I meet Him, everything that He in any sense could regard in me as an injury done to Him, everything will live in my memory, it will possess me, and the shame of it will blind my eyes to Him. I shall not dare to look into His Face, because sin cannot be undone ! His love for which there is no word adequate, and my love, my love that has been no love at all—shall meet !

Since sin is a personal matter between me and Jesus, penitence must mean a readiness to pay the price of sin. I must be ready to pay the price of sin. If I have hurt somebody amongst my friends on earth, if I have grossly offended him, it dawns upon me that my friend, however truly he loves me, has on his side a certain difficulty in getting back to the same relationship of love with me. The diffi-

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culty, though felt by him, is all on my side. I cannot help but shew that I am conscious of my sin, and the very fact of having been able to offend him so grossly shews there is something in me that must be altered and completely changed and done away, before I can ever get back to the original friendship. He took me originally and trusted and believed in me, and I seemed to be living up to his level and his standard, and I failed. Although he forgives me, I must exercise great patience before I can become anything like worthy of his friendship. How much more between me and Jesus ! In the dark times of temptation, in the dark times of prayer, in those wrong moods in which we perhaps give way to half rebellion against the whole thought of religion and devotion, we must remember that Love has conquered, and Love has forgiven us. But inasmuch as it is a personal matter, there is something in me which must be purged out of me before Love and I can meet on anything like true terms of joy and peace. I have to recognize that I have built up barriers between myself and Jesus that not even His love can break down. The barrier is something

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within me—it needs patience, an enduring patience, to get rid of that which hinders Jesus from coming to me, which hinders Jesus from any real approach to my soul. Have I the courage for it ?

Now you see the real meaning of the point of view we are taking this afternoon. Of course you have the courage for it, and of course you have every reason to hope and to trust in Him. It is the divine will to save, to redeem, to empower, to sanctify. There is no divine will to punish and to curse. It is only we who have punishments and curses on our side, and they are all on our side. Jesus has made Himself one with us ; Jesus is also on our side. He is one with you and me ; He has paid the debt ; He has offered the obedience we could not offer ; He has moved us to penitence—He Himself, with His own life of courage. So beautiful has He made Himself in our eyes, so glorious in His apparel, that we have ourselves broken down before Him, at His Feet—stayed to repent of our sin—withdrawn ourselves from the world to be with Him. So tender has His Love been for us that the injury our sins have done has come

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home to us. What can hinder us now ? What can hold us back from confident hope, from the endurance of the consequences of our sins ? “ We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our sins, but this Man has done nothing amiss.” Only for a little time you must live, I must live, under the sense of failure. We must live in darkness now and again ; we must live as though God had forsaken us, now and again, for a little time. “ What, could ye not watch with Me one hour ? ” In this Retreat, then, open your hearts to Him Whose love is so great, Whose pity is so wide, Who entirely understands you, Who will never let you go, and as penitent as He gives you power to be, heartbroken as He gives you the grace and power to be, do Him the honour of trusting Him !

My God, in Thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded.

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III

LET us contemplate the chosen Disciples of Jesus in their choice. The mother of Zebedee's children said : " Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom, but Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask, are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptised with ? They say unto Him, We are able."

Let us contemplate the promise of Jesus given to us by S. John : " Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my Voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His Throne."

O my God, I desire to love Thee, for

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Thou art alone worthy of love. I desire to give my whole heart to Thee, to keep nothing back. Fill me with Thy Holy Spirit of Love. Kill in me all that is of myself. Help me to resist all that is not of Thee. O Holy Spirit of Love, lift me up in faith. Thou knowest I desire to love Thee above all things. I desire to love all things in Thee and for Thee. Amen.

The first day of a Retreat is always the most difficult, partly because of ourselves and our habits. We don't get used to it. The peace of retreat doesn't come until we have made an act of self-committal, until we really have put self away, and registered our surrender of ourselves to Jesus. That doesn't mean that in the past we have never given ourselves to Him ; it doesn't mean that with all our hearts we may not be surrendered to Him ; but it does mean that as the years pass and Retreat follows Retreat, our Lord asks us to come up higher, and we commit ourselves again in that thought which is our peace. And I would have you, if you will, take some thoughts that may perhaps occupy you some little time to-

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night, and may perhaps bear fruit in your spiritual intention in your Communion to-morrow.

THE WILL OF CHRIST AND OUR CHOICE

Let us meditate upon the will of Christ and our final choice. Of course we all admit, don't we? that the will of Christ, His human will that reveals the purpose of God, will be the standard by which we shall be judged, and it is good to think of it in relation to our own ultimate choice. When we are asked to make the choice between good and evil, God and Satan, God and self, it is not put before us as a choice of things that are almost equal; it is not that the attractiveness of good and evil are so nearly the same that it is difficult to make the choice. It is not that we are choosing between two, one God and one myself—it is not that. I am choosing between the whole universe and myself. On one side there is the whole universe, and on the other side there is myself. God bids me choose between

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them. But, you will say, then, "is God the universe?" No! I don't mean that. Looking up to our Master Who bids us make our choice, we understand that the whole universe is summed up in Him! He asks me to choose Him. He it is Who demands that I pay Him all my worship, and for His Sake surrender everything else. Who is He? Jesus, the Son of Mary. Yes, Jesus the Son of Mary, but Jesus the King; Jesus the true Man, but Man Conqueror of sin and death; Jesus true Man, but Man seated upon the Throne of God Himself. It is He Who asks me to choose Him! It is into the Kingdom of the Great King that you and I are invited; it is to share the Kingship, it is to share the royalty of that Great King Who passed triumphant through the grave: it is to share the royalty, to share the lordship of Him before Whom all creation bows and trembles: it is to that you and I are called; it is for that we are bidden to reject ourselves.

Or think of that wonderful communion between God and Man. It is summed up in the two words, Grace and Worship. To-day, as ever, there in Heaven, Jesus,

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Son of Mary, stands as Priest. In His Perfect Manhood, risen and glorious, dwells the Eternal Spirit of God, and from the Heart of Jesus out into this world of sin flows the life-giving stream, the precious Blood, the Blood which is the very medium of the coming of the Holy Spirit to you and me. From the Heart of Jesus that power comes out which is His very Self, on which we feed, and it is into that that we are called to come. It is for partnership in that mystery of Grace that we are asked to reject ourselves. So also we are called to co-operate with Him in worship. For standing there, in His own Throne that belongs to Him as triumphant Man, the Throne so little lower than the Divine Throne, the Throne of Eternity, He dwells with His Father, and there in His Manhood He stands, and in His Heart the Spirit has taken possession, and the Spirit gathers the worship of all men and women of every age who have been made members of Jesus ; offers it on the lips, by the hands and through the Heart of Jesus, Son of Mary. It is into that worship and into that grace that you and I are bidden to come, if we will.

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It is not a hard command to choose right, to choose duty and to discipline yourselves. No, it is the opening up of all that can most attract and most inspire a really human heart. It is the invitation to come and share that which is wonderful in its attractiveness. Jesus makes it beautiful, in order that He may attract us, in order to entice us to commit ourselves to Him. And I sit and think, is it worth while, this Kingship, is it worth it? Who but a madman could doubt that it is worth it all? To be absolutely one in mind and heart and life with Him Who rules the universe, and that at the small cost of an act of self-committal! Indeed, I choose Him: "Lord Jesus, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou leadest." And this Priesthood, who that honours the name of man would doubt that it is worth while, absolutely and utterly worth while, if only we can have a distant share in the life-giving ministry of grace, or in that unspeakable mystery of worship? And to-night, as I prepare for my Communion, I make my choice. He will make it real for me to-morrow, for I shall meet Him—Jesus the King, coming to me in virtue of His Kingship, proving

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His real authority over creation, taking to Himself the Bread and Wine, the symbols of creation, and binding them to His Will, moulding them to His own spiritual purpose, doing with them what He pleases, raising them to become His very Body and His very Blood. He will come to me in the morning, true Priest, bringing grace, speaking truth, and He will assemble around Him in the morning all who are in any way desirous of pleading the Sacrifice before the Father. And everything depends in this Retreat, as everything finally depends for our final salvation, on our ability to give ourselves once and for all into the keeping of Jesus.

Now, what does it mean to give myself to Jesus? As we understand it, all the power of God that ever comes to man is brought to us by the Holy Spirit. To the Holy Spirit we ourselves have offered, as His Temple, our body, soul and spirit. It is therefore in union with Jesus first that we come under the influence of the Power of God which the Spirit brings. It is as we grow in union with Jesus and become indwelt by the Holy Spirit that we find ourselves co-operating with the Divine Power

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Who made and upholds the universe, and become ourselves empowered in ministry, powerful each in his own degree, powerful in the Work of God.

Now, what is the fundamental union with Jesus, the fundamental act of choice that we ought to try and make quite early in Retreat? If we might put it simply : I want to choose to depend upon Jesus, Jesus only : that first ! It is quite astonishing sometimes to wake up to the fact that one depends on many other things than Jesus. We depend, some of us, almost entirely on routine and outward circumstances. We are absolutely lost if the outward side of our life gets changed for any length of time. We depend upon books, we depend upon people, we depend upon this priest or upon that priest ; the one Person in the whole wide universe that we cannot depend upon entirely is Jesus.

It is a good thing to make once more one's real choice : " I choose Thee, Lord Jesus." That does not mean that we are not to use in moderation all the help that people or things can give us, but it does entirely mean that we must become more zealous for the honour of Jesus, and that

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we ought to be able, as time goes on, to trust Him and learn to stand alone. I have been wondering whether we really sufficiently have learnt what the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews tried to make his people understand—that there is a time for living on milk, and a time for strong meat. Don't you think that some of us, all of us, have need to learn that ? We are to depend upon Jesus, primarily Jesus, and Jesus only.

Secondly, we must deliberately choose to become enthusiastic for Jesus ; we must choose to become zealous for Jesus. We cannot have this great heavenly movement, of which this Ascended Lord is the Sun, going on round about us without trying to throw ourselves into it. We ought not to be able to tolerate our own indifference to these marvellous spiritual forces which were set in motion at the Ascension and at Pentecost. Now, of course, enthusiasm for Jesus does not mean talking about Him ; it certainly does not mean being fussy, or making oneself a nuisance or a bore to other people. It does mean just this: when the Lord Jesus looks down upon us, He is to find burning in our hearts the desire for the fulfilment of what He desires. We have

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to choose to keep our hearts from many other things that the interests of our Lord Jesus may find room within us. And of course it also means that when work has to be done, when people have an obvious claim upon us, upon our interest, upon our spiritual endeavour, upon our words to them, our Lord can see us trying to meet the need. We ought to require no external prompting. We choose to be enthusiastic for Jesus ; we choose here on earth, as far as lies in our power, to be caught into the great spiritual movement, of which the consummation is the day of God's great glory.

And lastly, we must choose to aim at an inward union with Jesus. The most inward and secret thing in my life must be my endeavour to come into closer union with Jesus. Now, that is a matter of deliberate choice, because there are things that have to be given up, if that is to become possible. Isn't that what S. Paul means when he says " the life that I now live, I live by the faith in the Son of God " ? Isn't that what the Prayer Book means when it speaks of Jesus dwelling in us and we in Him ? Doesn't it mean that there is a secret point of contact

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between us and those heavenly forces that are moving the universe and us ? And the secret point of contact is in our inner union with Jesus, a union we have most deliberately chosen, and for which we are prepared to pay, in Christ's strength, whatever it may cost us.

Now before my Communion to-morrow it would be a good thing if I thought of these things : the measure of my dependence upon Jesus—how far I am able to stand alone with Jesus and face what comes ; my enthusiasm for Jesus ; and this inward secret union with Him. These are the things that go to make up my choice. There are many others—I suggest these three.

And then, when we have thought that out, there comes the great act of self-committal. Now this is nothing new, because every time we make our Communion we make an act of self-committal, don't we ? Only in Retreat, and at the end of the first day of retreat, we do so want it to be a real one. Well now, what is the act itself ? Surely in making an act of self-committal to Jesus, we bar out completely all thoughts of time, of

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the future—the whole essence of the act is one of absolute and complete confidence in Him. I come to Him and He comes to meet me, and in the Blessed Sacrament He reaches out to me : “ My son, my daughter, give Me thine heart. Canst thou drink of the cup that I shall drink of and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ? ” And we don’t answer. We neither say, “ I am able,” nor do we say, “ I am not able,” but in absolute silent prayer, in silent self-surrender, we cast ourselves into the arms of Jesus, shutting out the future as He in His mercy has shut out the past, and in the very silence of our self-committal we yield ourselves to Him, for whatever He shall please to bring upon us, or allow the world to bring upon us. That is what we want. That is the test of the great self-committal in death. That is the seed, the only seed, that bears fruit to perfect life eternal.

He comes, then, in the morning, my King, the Priest of the whole universe. He comes to gather me to His Father, He comes to put me in subjection to His Father, He comes to gather up from me

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whatever of obedient worship, whatever of humble penitence He may find in me, to offer in His Spirit. He comes to take me into co-operation with Himself, me who am so imperfect, so useless, who have so often disappointed Him, who have hardly dared to think that it was worth while beginning again. Still, He is coming for that one purpose. And I am making a new choice—new, yet always the same—new in the strength in which I offer it, in the determination with which I mean to abide by it, please God. I offer my self-surrender, and I come at His Call, because He wants me, and because His power is greater than my weakness.

It is the Lord, it is the Lord !
Jesus, my Lord and my God.

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I

LET us contemplate Jesus in His Passion. "And He came out and went as He was wont to the Mount of Olives ; and His disciples followed Him. And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast and kneeled down and prayed saying : Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me, nevertheless, not My Will but Thine be done. And there appeared an Angel unto Him from Heaven strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood." "They took Jesus and led Him away. And He bearing His Cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull which is called Golgotha where they crucified Him, and Pilate wrote a title and put it on the Cross, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." "And

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Jesus knowing all things were now accomplished saith, I thirst.”

Also S. John xx. 28-35.

Lord Jesus, look upon us Thy faithless children ; we bewail our lack of trust, our faithlessness ; we have not trusted Thy love, Lord Jesus, we have not trusted in Thy power ; being in darkness we refused Thy light—not once refused Thee, but often, because of our faithlessness. Pour out upon us Thy Holy Spirit that with our whole hearts we may trust Thee, trust without question what Thou givest ! Jesus, my Jesus, I can give Thee nothing, I can offer Thee nothing, no faithfulness, no goodness, no true fruits of penitence. I am full of sin, weakness, dullness and lovelessness. But, Lord Jesus, *Thou* art Love, Joy, Peace ; and in Thee have I put my trust. O Saviour of the world, Who by Thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, good Lord. Amen.

JESUS IN HIS PASSION

Let us meditate this morning on the Passion as it gives us our true point of view. I suppose that we all admit that what has been wrong with the world from the beginning, what has been fundamentally wrong, is that man has got hold of the wrong point of view, and has looked out upon his own life, and through his own life upon mankind, from the wrong standpoint. All the philosophers from the beginning have been reaching out to the right point of view, that they might themselves secure it and shew it to others. And it is absolutely true that no philosopher has yet found the true, the perfect standpoint. It was revealed to us through no philosopher, through no learned words, through no learned theory—it is merely the simple story of the life of the Son of Mary. The Cross and the Crucified are the perfect and unchanging revelation of the standpoint man must take up if he would understand God, the world, and himself. It comes with a shock, doesn't

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it ? Think how the adoption of this true standpoint would affect London to-day, London, the very centre of modern activity and modern thought, where we live surrounded by philosophers, prophets and teachers, political, moral, scientific, who all claim to interpret life and scheme to find methods for the redemption of mankind. What a change there would be if all these would confess that it is Jesus, and Jesus Crucified, in Whose face alone we can see God !

Let us meditate, then, on the Passion, until it becomes clear to our minds that it is only in contemplation of the Passion that we can understand God and the world, the people in the world, and ourselves. This is the supreme revelation. We must leave behind our own views of things, our own judgments of ourselves, our own thoughts of the way in which we suppose that God will treat us, or does treat us ; leave behind our values of the world, of the things of sense ; leave behind us our own opinion about God's love and God's pity and God's anger, and just contemplate Jesus and Him crucified. I believe in Jesus Christ the only-begotten

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Son of God, Who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.

Let us meditate on the Passion as the point of view from which to measure the Father's love. We get into a habit of thinking that, after all, people like Tennyson were probably right when they speak to us of the cruelty of nature. In our shallow judgments of the hardship and troubles that come, if not to us, at least to other people, we accept the general hopelessness, and social troubles make us doubt the Father's love. Yet all we absolutely know clearly about the Father's love is that on the Cross the Heart of Jesus, Who is the Incarnation of the Divine Love, was pierced by a spear for our sake, and for the sake of men. We know nothing clearly about nature, we can guess nothing as to the inner meaning of natural laws ; we know very little indeed about the relation between suffering and holiness ; we know very little indeed about God's ultimate purpose behind all social problems ; still less do we know about sin and the probable power of sin in resistance of God's love. One thing is shewn to us, His children,

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with absolute clearness, on which we can stake everything we have : God of God, for our sake, for our salvation came down from Heaven, was crucified, dead and buried. There is the Father's love, then, made absolutely clear, apart from all problems : there is the eternal truth about God and God's love.

Starting from this, I come first to the truth that whatever is in the world of pain and suffering and sorrow, in fact all that goes against what we call human happiness, is on one side, and God is on the other. God stands over against those things and looks upon them with that sadness with which a Creator must look upon His marred creation. I know that, from the standpoint of the Passion, God is on my side. God is my Father and I am His child. Looking out over this world of suffering He bids me come with Him into the very midst of it. He says to me : " Now, My son, look, this is the world I made, and this is the world you men have ruined. The world must come straight some day, the world must be redeemed, and you, My son, must choose. Are you ready to take your stand by your

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Father's side and to throw yourself into the midst of this suffering world and to take all the suffering and pain that comes to you as a true son of your Father? Are you ready to accept suffering, to endure it, and yet all the while cling to Me, and trust Me, to justify Me and to vindicate My righteousness and love? Are you ready? Or will you do what the world does—curse Me and make out that it is all My fault? ” And I answer Him—what shall I answer Him? I am troubled and puzzled, and in suffering. I look up, and all I can say is, “I believe in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made: Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified.” That is the love I see and upon that love I rest. Gladly I let my Father lead me into the thickest part of suffering, gladly let Him hide Himself from me, gladly let the

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clouds pass as between me and Him. Indeed I feel the waves pass over me : and yet, in the sight of Angels and of devils and of men, in my heart I keep my faith and confidence in my Father's love. My faith and my trust become really and truly redemptive powers, not only redeeming my life, but redemptive in the lives of other people. For in my heart there is found a secret point of contact between the Father Who made the world and the world that needs the Father's power.

But is that in fact the way we think of the Father's love ? Is that our standpoint ? Meditate on it. Contemplate Jesus, and let us remember that in as far as Jesus is Man there is no difference between His circumstances and yours and mine. Gethsemane needs no olive trees to make it Gethsemane, needs no band of disciples gathered round the gates, no band of priests and soldiers to give it its reality. Gethsemane needs only one thing : it requires a world hostile to God, in whatever form it shews itself to you, and your head bowed to accept the inevitable suffering, your heart filled with trust in the hidden Father—that is all.

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Whether it is due to our own sins and our temptations that we are in trouble, or whether it is due to friends or relations that we are moved to anxiety, whether it is the real battle against the world that we are fighting, whether it is suffering of mind or body, whether it is the pressure of external circumstances that makes us anxious—whatever it is, we know that it is not our Father's Will that these things should come upon us. Yet we know that since they have come upon us inevitably, because of the world's sins, we must brace ourselves and bear all that comes—it is our Father's Will that we should trust Him. Isn't it clear, so clear? And we must keep this ideal, though, God knows, it is hard enough in practice. Therefore we must in our prayer to-day keep out all doubt and despondency. What can one say to a desponding soul? What more *could* God do? There are times, aren't there, when we get into a state of mind in which it would seem that God would have to devise for us some new system of salvation, so utterly desponding do we get. But it is our own fault, it is really and truly our own fault that we cannot be-

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come simple, cannot believe, cannot be certain that Eternal Love is for us, that the Father's love is the eternal fact of the universe.

As we gaze upon Jesus crucified let us meditate a little upon the ways of God as they are unlike our ways. The Love of God is so different from what we call love. Let us meditate upon that a little, it may help us. God Himself sacrifices Himself, even to the death of the Cross. That is startling, and we need to weigh it. Because one of the puzzling things in life is that God's power over people seems so limited. We see people resisting God, or we think we do. We imagine that when we begin to pray for people, that at once, or after a little time, such an answer to prayer will come as will agree with our own views about God's Love. And if the answer doesn't come, we get troubled, we think that perhaps we aren't worthy to pray, that it is our own fault. Or perhaps we think, we are tempted to think, that God's arm is shortened and that it cannot save.

Well now, we ought to get a juster view of the Charity of God. We ought to under-

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stand that our good God, our Father *can alone* be trusted to know what is best for each one of us. We know the mercy of the Father, and we ought to be able to believe that if, in any way, the Father can draw out of a soul, in the most secret way, the least desire to be saved, He can do something with that soul beyond the grave. We must give up distrusting God. What a terrible thing it is that God, for these two thousand years, has looked into the Face of the Son of Mary, looked upon the Manhood of the Eternal Son, and watched daily the marks of the Passion ; that these two thousand years He has been waiting and receiving momentarily the Holy Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Calvary ; and that yet He looks down on us and finds us doubting ! The way out for us, the way back to hopefulness and faith, is not to meditate on our own unworthiness, our own unfaithfulness, our own ingratitude, our own blindness—but on Love crucified. If a child comes to me and says : “ I am really sorry because I have not been treating you properly,” I don’t want to go into the reasons why he didn’t trust me : he has come to me,

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and I have got hold of him, and we begin from that moment a new life of mutual trust. So does God treat us. "Let the dead bury their dead, but follow thou Me."

Again, from the Passion we get the point of view from which to regard other people ; the point of view from which we judge others, estimate others, and give to each one his or her value. For most of us, I suppose, a great deal of our life has been spent in trying to learn to "judge not," and as a commandment to be kept it is quite extraordinarily hard ! "Judge not and ye shall not be judged." What we really need is an ideal—not one that we shall attain here, perhaps, but an ideal at which we shall always aim, and by which we shall examine ourselves. My neighbours are uninteresting enough ; they bore me ; their weak spots are quite evident ; their sins obtrude themselves on my notice. And I, equally fallible, desire to pry into their motives and judge them. I need an ideal of love, because I have to live with these neighbours in the Charity of God beyond the grave ; and I want to learn to do it here. Therefore I

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look up to the Cross, and I see the value that each soul has to Jesus : " God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The Son of God Who loves my neighbour gave Himself for my neighbour—there then is the value of his soul to Jesus. And following upon that, I am bound to confess to myself that the Body and Blood of Jesus received by so many of my neighbours, lift them up to a level far above my power of judging. If I could see Jesus with my eyes, if I could see Him come into the room, and out of a room full of people select one and take that one to be His companion for the day, shouldn't I understand the value of that soul ? And if I had any respect for Jesus, shouldn't I know that I ought to shut my mind against any feeling of jealousy, or any depreciation of that soul ? That is the kind of ideal I want to get, to correct in me the tendency to be unkind by the vision of Jesus choosing out a soul to be His own companion. And if the soul refuses and rejects Him, yet He follows it to woo it to Himself, trying to draw it to

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Himself, just as he does with the heathen soul. This is the ideal we learn from the Passion. You cannot hold the Feet of Jesus on His Cross, you cannot really give Him what He wants from you, unless you are prepared to let Him value the souls of other people for you.

Now in Retreat, those of us who have got any, the least, difficulty with other people—relations, friends, fellow-workers—if we have any difficulty which stands in the way of perfect charity then in prayer to-day let us get it right. You will go—I am going—to the Crucifix. I am going to give my heart to the Heart of Jesus, and to find a place in my heart for whoever it is who hurts me, a place corresponding to the place in the Heart of Jesus which that person already fills.

And may I urge that from the Passion we gain our true ideal of our relations with other people, because in everybody who comes into our life there is the right to make a claim upon us, a right they have received from Jesus, the Crucified Jesus? The human race belongs to Jesus, to Jesus Who is its King, and the human race is in need, and one by one Jesus sends

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to us His people, Christian and pagan : He sends them to us, each one with a need that Jesus means us in some way to meet. This is the underlying truth in all Christian work and Christian service. It is that kind of vision that helps us in our homes, in our work in the world, and in our work for the Church. And little by little (it is a very slow process), little by little, the Veil that hides Jesus fades, and more and more the sense of the Presence of Jesus in daily life comes home to us. We feel, as it were, the pressure of the Hand of Jesus.

Thirdly and lastly, let us meditate on what the Passion teaches us about the value of earthly things, the outside world, and creatures other than human. It is necessary that in thinking of God's creatures we should think in a balanced way. The first instinct of a converted soul is to regard most things as wicked, everything as essentially evil and to be avoided. And of course in so far as a soul is carrying out the counsels of our Lord Jesus and cutting off a right hand and plucking out an eye, he is in some ways right. But if a converted soul really believes the world is in itself evil, he is

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unbalanced ; and the result will be that he will give a wrong explanation of God and of God's creatures. The Passion teaches us better than that. We lift up our eyes to the Cross, and at once we understand the danger of the world ; we understand the sin that is in the world, for the Crucified reveals it. If you have learnt that the things that are in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, did actually conspire together to crucify God that is a sufficient warning of the power and danger of the world. But the true message is this : That God came to redeem His creatures, and that the world is capable of redemption—and it is upon that we ought to lay all our stress, all our emphasis. You individually must share in the world's redemption. That the world is capable of redemption, and therefore is meant to be used by Christians, there can be no doubt, since Jesus died to redeem it.

It is a beautiful, if a common thought, that our Lord Jesus passed through the ordinary human experiences of life, the ordinary working man's life, in close touch with the things of this world in

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order that He might redeem it ; that everything that the Hand of the Incarnate touched became alive to the Glory of God, and everything that the Incarnate took into close touch with His Manhood became redeemed. Thus His Mystical Bride, the Church, of which you and I are living parts, must move through His own world doing for her Spouse in the world what He would do. That which on earth He did Himself the Mystic Bride moves to do, and whatever she touches in faith, lives in Him, is redeemed, is transformed. Remember, the Mystic Bride prepares the way for the restitution of all things. What we have to understand is that what is human is not in itself wrong. You find Christians who stand off from the ordinary pleasures of social life. But why should we ? Social life becomes hideous at times when used by pagans and bad Christians, but it is capable of redemption. You find people who are frightened of nature, frightened at the beauties that are in nature. Why should they be ? I am not speaking of persons with a special vocation to this or that—I am speaking of ordinary Christians. We ought to look

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upon the world as capable of redemption and ourselves as linked with the Redeemer, and so linked with Him we may take our ordinary share in life and be careful that what we touch we touch in faith and with the power of redeeming it.

And lastly, we have to become *indifferent* to these things. It is difficult to explain. It doesn't mean to be loveless, hard and cold ; but it does mean that in our attitude towards the things of sense, to the things of the world, we are so engrossed by Him Who made them, that if for any reason this or that thing is taken away from us, whatever disturbance it makes in us is merely on the surface, and deep down in our hearts we have learned really not to care. This is what the Passion teaches us about the things concerning Creation. No one was less indifferent than Jesus, no love burned more fiercely than the Divine Love in the heart of Jesus, and yet the Passion is one long study in the art of being indifferent. To part with everything as Jesus did, with His friends, with His own Mother, with His beloved friend, with all His earthly possessions ; to hang naked upon the Cross ; to surrender bodily life ;

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to surrender what you and I would call human happiness and peace ; and enter into unspeakable, unthinkable pain of body and soul ; and yet deep down in His Inner Self, in spite of the pain and the Cross, to be absolutely content, that is true indifference.

The Passion teaches us all these things. But the important thing is, that we should think of the Father's Love and Pity working ; that out of our hearts to-day we draw and throw away despondency and despair. Whether we can speak to Him or whether we are dumb, whether we can put into words what we feel, whether we can conjure up feelings that we think can be worthy or not, we must cast ourselves before Him, because in His Love He brought us to His Feet ; and very hungry and thirsty we must wait upon Him, giving nothing, *simply waiting*. For " He filleth the hungry with good things."

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II

LET us contemplate Eternal Love :
Eternal Love in the threefold nature
of the Godhead.

Let us contemplate Eternal Love in the
power of the Spirit, seeking entrance into
the hearts of men and always being re-
fused.

Let us contemplate Eternal Love in the
power of the Spirit, winning Mary to
acceptance, and taking flesh of Mary.

Let us contemplate Eternal Love reach-
ing the highest point of expression on the
Cross : " God so loved the world that He
gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever
believeth in Him should not perish but
have everlasting life."

Contemplate the chosen ones of Jesus,
who have learned to love with His love—
the Martyrs, the great Saints of the
Church, each one yielding himself or
herself and reaching to the highest ex-
pression of love that endures unto death.

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Contemplate them in Heaven to-day, kneeling round the steps of the Throne of Jesus.

O my God, I believe in Thee, Eternal Love. I believe for love of me Thou hast created me and that out of love for me Thou hast left me to suffer. I believe that out of love for me, Thou hast left me in darkness. Out of love for me, Thou hast left me to be a burden to myself. O my Father, relying on Jesus Crucified, I believe in Thee, in Thy love, in Thy pity, in Thy Wisdom. O my Father, I am nothing, I have nothing, and to-day, Lord Jesus, I desire nothing but to fulfil Thy Will. Give me Thy Love. With Thy Grace I am rich enough. My Father, leave me in the Hand of Jesus Crucified ; let His Grace be in me ; let His Love enfold me, and in Thy Wisdom punish me and forgive me according to Thy Will.

Lord, one hour of watching,
Lord, one hour of darkness,
Lord, one hour of anguish,
And eternity of joy.

THE PASSION THE FRUIT OF LOVE

Let us meditate upon the Passion as it is the true development, the right and proper fruit of true love. The Incarnate Love was never so much Himself in the fullness of His expression and manifestation as in the moment of His Death. The unchangeable Word of God, taking to Himself a human form and entering into human experience, and expressing Himself in human language, on a human level, develops His outward expression of Himself until it requires Calvary's Cross!

The difference between the Babe on the knees of His Mother and the Man hanging on the Cross, from this point of view, is a difference of self-expression. There is growth of His Manhood. He found Himself, if we may reverently use the word, He found His highest development as Man in the moment of His Death. Now that of course is a paradox, and it cuts right across what we in this generation

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would call self-development. The idea of this generation is free self-development. We are all for liberty of action, of complete independence : leave me to myself and let me make the most of my life. This is profoundly untrue, the exact opposite of the truth. The truth is : Take me out of myself, take me utterly out of myself, and let me lose myself in the Divine Love, and I become perfect man.

And the first point that I would submit to you is this. There is a conflict between God and the world. It is a conflict between Love and self-will. The Eternal One is in controversy with His people. Who is He ? Can we name Him ? Love, the Eternal Love ! And with whom is He in controversy ? With His own children : children created in His own Image and Likeness, to whom He has imparted that mysterious gift of free-will. And the controversy is of the evil use that they make of that free-will ; the controversy ultimately is of the goal that they set before themselves ; the controversy is of their idea of growth and development. How do they ultimately realize themselves in God or apart from God ? God, the good

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Father in Heaven, limits His own power over us His children. This we must think out. Such is the reverence of God for His own children that, unlike us, He is strong enough and loving enough to hold His Hand, He will not interfere with their ultimate choice. He will give them warnings without number ; influence He will exercise up to a certain point ; but there comes a point beyond which our Father will not go in interference, lest He should seem to despise His child. The Father always respects His child's free-will, and there we have a great and deep problem into which we need not go. From the beginning of things there is Love watching the child, Love reverencing the child, and the free-will of His child, and waiting for the child to make the right choice.

In the second place this : Eternal Love, although self-limited, is Almighty, and holds all things in His Hands. The almighty power of Love does interfere with the external side of the child's life in all mercy and pitifulness. Almighty Love does interfere, does modify the circumstances of the child's life. Without a

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shadow of doubt the Father's Love does modify the result of the child's act and choice, over and over again, but not to the point of robbing him of his freedom, not to the point of saving him from some of the results of his evil choices. To do that would be to depreciate the Father's Love ; to do that would be to blind the child. Without doubt Almighty Love does modify temptation, does in various ways lighten the load to the child. He is always near, though hidden and unthanked—and unthanked He moves and works—unthought of, the Father's Love moves and works, and that right through life. And the power is most visible as life draws to its close. It is in the moment of death that the Almighty Power has its fullest work, for it is in the moment of death that the Almighty sets the soul free from the body which has been linked with sin, free from those circumstances that have poisoned the child's whole thought about its Father. In a moment Almighty Power sets the soul free, sets it face to face with the Father's Love for the last great appeal, and there, in the moment of death, God finds the moment of miracle.

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You remember, some of you, in *The Ring and the Book*, the Pope's great speech when as judge he signs the death warrant for the murderer's death, and how, in spite of the murderer's black record, the unspeakable cruelty and bestiality of the man, he does it in the certain hope that in the moment of death, when Almighty Power holds the soul as for a second free from all that had been the circumstances of sin, Guido shall see the truth.

Then thirdly, we ask this : What is the nature of this limited power that the Father exercises over His child, over the inner soul of His child ? He limits His Power for the honour of the child, lest He should force it. What is the nature of the force that Eternal Love puts out as we watch Him at work ? And I suppose in reply we can say quite truly this : That first of all there is Love's great appeal—the Passion. The Passion is the appeal which every man who meets it must take notice of. The Crucified sends His Voice down the ages and it falls on the ears of the children of God : “ Come unto Me ;—Behold and see if there be any sorrow like

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unto My sorrow." So God loved the world—so God loves you. "Son, give me thine heart."

There is the great appeal of Love. And remember, it is on the Father's side ; it is not an historical appeal only ; it is a present appeal ; for He Who died, *lives*, and the appeal is made not only through the senses, not only through the Crucifix, not only through the story of the Passion, not only through memory : it is made by the mystical approach of Jesus in grace to the soul of the sinner. It is set forth to the senses, to the imagination, to the mind and to the heart ; every time that Holy Mass is said we do set forth the Lord's Death till He come. And there is the appeal of Love with all its force and its power, and you know its enormous force. I have known Africans walk for something like five hours on a Saturday night in order that they may be at Mass on Sunday morning, for the simple reason, as they put it : "If the Lord Christ was coming to meet them they could not stay away."

The appeal of Love—this first. Love makes its appeal. But also Love creates

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the atmosphere in which the children can more or less safely exercise their free-will and their choice. It is to the making of that atmosphere that the lives of the Saints and of the Martyrs go. Everybody who becomes a child of God in Baptism has a chance, or is meant by the Father to have a chance, of breathing in an atmosphere of Love, such as the great Saints stand for. Is not that a force? Might it not be a great power? Is it the Father's fault that it is very little of a power? We feel it, don't we? Perhaps we have come to feel it since we have grown up, but we know for ourselves that we do live in an atmosphere of Divine Love. We know it; and God has meant it to be a real force even here in a city like London.

Then there is the great force of Love's Life that is imparted to us. There is the whole of the Sacramental Life in which Love feeds us, verily and truly, with Himself. There are many other ways no doubt, but these stand out, and as you meditate, as you get alone in prayer with the Almighty Power that holds your life in His Hand, as you pray to that Almighty

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Power that moulds your life, yet does not overcome you, if you fear that He is too limited, you will come to see for yourselves that the limited power is sufficient. For those who hold by Him, who give up their hearts to His appeal of Love, are with Angels and Archangels and all the Company of Heaven, with Mary our Mother, with the great Apostles, the Martyrs, the Virgins, the Holy Saints, the monks, the nuns, the holy matrons, with all who down the ages make this atmosphere in which we live. It closes round us and becomes our known experience of Jesus and His life-giving Love. Such is the self-limited Power of God !

Now what follows ? This follows. That you and I are needed by our Blessed Lord to swell the volume of the appeal of Love ; we are needed to widen the atmosphere of Love. This is the ordinary vocation of every Christian soul. If it be true that in Heaven at this moment our Lord Jesus Christ reigns surrounded by His Saints ; if it be true that His Heart is the unifying Power drawing into Itself all the love that they ever loved and all the sacrifice that they ever offered to the Father, drawing

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it to Himself ; if He offers it in adoration and worship to the Eternal God and sends it out again into the world for our conversion and strengthening ; then without doubt He is waiting for our co-operation, waiting and looking for a similar offering of love and sacrifice that is to come from us in this world, from this city of sin in which we live. Jesus on His Throne looks to each one of us for our share in the offering ; and it is in the moment in which a man or woman comes to realize this as the essential fact of life that the true peace of God passes upon the soul : " My Peace I leave with you, My Peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

Again, the Love that Jesus asks from us must shew itself in sacrifice ; it only becomes perfect through sacrifice. God's Love, as it is known to us, is all sacrifice, joyful happy sacrifice. The Eternal Love is eternal sacrifice. Of course it is difficult to say much without getting into metaphysics. The vision that we have now and again in our prayer on such Feasts as Trinity Sunday, when we are contemplating the Blessed Trinity, we cannot put

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into words, we cannot write down. I should be very sorry to have to explain it. But we have a sort of vision of the eternal relationship between the Father and the Eternal Son. We know the Eternal Son has no existence apart from the Father. Always He is receiving all that He is from His Father. Thus it is that the Father reproduces Himself in the Eternal Son. It is sacrifice, the joyful giving of self, the pouring out the whole of Himself. So that if you ask a theologian the essential difference between the Father and the Son, he answers you that their Godhead is one and equal, but the Father is ever conscious of giving; and the Son is ever conscious of receiving, yet Both are Eternal. It is a mystery we cannot understand, but the point is that Eternal Love is Eternal Sacrifice—joyful and happy.

Pass on to this for a moment. Eternal Love touches man the moment that Eternal Love takes His supreme place amongst His own creatures through Manhood. And when Eternal Love touches sin and the sinful race, His sacrifice is tinged with sorrow. The human love of

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Jesus, inasmuch as it is the expression of Divine Love, is sacrifice. This sacrifice is not, in the human sense, joyful : it is painful. It involves Him in death and darkness of soul ; and yet it is through the darkness and through the death that Jesus comes to the expression of His highest Manhood, by His perfect human self-sacrifice. He learnt obedience through the things which He suffered. He became obedient unto death. "Therefore God highly exalted Him and hath given Him a Name which is above every other name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow."

Thus for us, too, it is perfectly clear that love comes to perfection only in sacrifice. Think of typical kinds of love. Take first the married love. Is there any doubt that the most beautiful form of human love, the form of human love most nearly representing to us the Father's love, is that of a true mother ? Love, true human love, finding its self-expression in sacrifice and in pain through marriage, is the self-sacrifice of the mother or father. A mother attains through her self-sacrifice a form of saintliness which is beyond our words to

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express. You know as well as I do that in the slums of London there are sacrificial forms of love that are not unworthy to be ranked with the sacrifices of the great saints. Ordinary human beings pass, by the way of love, into sacrifice, and so attain self-realization and the full development of self.

Or take a thing like the Religious Life and, though on entirely different lines, you arrive at the same results. There you have a man or woman through pure love of our Lord forming an alliance with Him in a special way. You watch the soul newly espoused to the Bridegroom, and you watch the Bridegroom as He leads that soul through manifold paths of painful searching, as He looses upon the soul temptations and the burden of trial, the burden of its obedience, the burden of sin and the realization of sin within its own soul and in the world, until the life becomes a living sacrifice of love, and the religious soul finds its perfection in that particular sacrificial love. And it is true of you and of me. We each in our own vocation have to learn from the Passion to look for our true self-development in a love

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that is content to suffer, that looks to sacrifice as the perfect way towards self-development.

Now please do not for a moment think that when we use the word sacrifice we mean that everybody has to go and look for some place or circumstances that are extraordinarily uncomfortable. Not that at all. When our Lord calls me to sacrifice and to love He wants it, probably, here in the very circumstances in which I am already living my life. The tendency at once to get up and look for some other place and some other surroundings is shallow : at the best we can only say it is generous.

Then, practically, and in conclusion, may I say one or two things? Let me state it in the first person. I need more and more to make up my mind, as I look out upon this wilderness of unlove, this hard world, to plunge right into it, and in the midst of the unlove to bring God's Love that is in my soul to bear upon all my circumstances.

Or think about it in this way. I sit here conscious of all the things that seem to shut out God from me, conscious of all

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the difficulties of the spiritual life, conscious of the claims of the world upon me, of its influence within me, and I feel that it is no good, that I shall never be any different from what I am. Well now, into this heart of mine I am going to receive the fellowship of suffering from Him Who offers it to me : into this heart that has a conscious knowledge of unlove, I am going to receive from Him Who offers it to me, the fellowship of sanctified love. I give myself to be the victim of unlove, to be the victim of all that is contrary to peace and happiness, as I count peace and happiness, and in the power of the Love of Jesus, in the power of this sacrificial life, I surrender myself to be a living, suffering link between the unlove of the world and the hidden yet conquering Love of the Father.

Whatever I was before the Retreat, whatever there was in me to be set aside in my life at home, in my life outside my home, in my life in secret with Jesus, in my life in the Church, in the world, whatever there was of life of which I hadn't found the meaning, whatever there was that still exercised over me a power of evil,

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a power of despair, a power of despondency—that now, in this moment, I defy. I defy it, not in the sense that it will never, never fascinate me again, but I defy it in the sense that it shall never, never conquer me again. God shews me that He needs me to endure all that, because He wants to enlarge the atmosphere of Sacrificial Love: He wants to send resounding out the appeal of Sacrificial Love.

Do you suppose the martyrs looked to Jesus to take away their sufferings from them? Have you ever thought what their martyrdom meant? You read stories of their martyrdoms, and the authors tell you that they seemed to have a strange power of not feeling pain in the moment of their deaths. Have you ever thought what it meant—of the days and days of practical torture in those old Roman prisons, of the absolute uncertainty in their minds as to their fate and of what would become of their bodies? If you think of the awful physical suffering and the quite unthinkable tortures of mind, you will see that if in the hour of death they had a strange ecstasy from above, it was because they had endured to the end—

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they had not wanted to escape. God gave them sufficient strength to respond to Him each moment up to their death. And they died in peace. Well now, why, why should you and I expect a lighter burden when we expect an equal crown ?

Let us, then, determine to-day that we will be ready to experience any kind of spiritual difficulty that God allows to come upon us in the way of temptations, of darkness, or of assaults upon our faith and our personal trust in God's Providence. All that we shall be content to endure and face, because we *do* want, so far as God can trust us, to be used by Him to increase the great volume of faith in Him which is needed to swell this witness to His Love. When God is looking for an ever-increasing witness to His Love in every generation, when God is waiting for a fuller measure of accepted suffering, we can't be so mean as to want to escape our share. What can we offer that is not based upon a real experience ? O that we could see Him ! If we could only see in the moment of our doubt and darkness that the union of the race with God does not depend upon Jesus *lonely*, but upon Jesus in company with

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His spiritual children, and that in every generation there is an offering of faith and of hope to the Father, upon which the whole development of the Church depends ! In our generation God comes to us and asks for our share, and we turn from Him and say : “ No, that is not what we came into religion for. We expected peace, we expected never to have doubts about our absolutions, or about our communions : we expected to have a quiet life, and instead we find we are in darkness, and we are tempted. We expected we should be tempted *a little*, and that after we had said a certain number of prayers, we should conquer the temptation.”

Then we look up to the Cross. We know what happened on the Cross, and we see gathered round the Cross multitudes of men and women who in their generation were content to endure to the end, knowing that no experience of suffering was wasted in this life, if it be given to fill up the tale of suffering that still remains to be filled before the Mystical Body of the Church comes to perfection. Oh, to-day let us enlist ourselves afresh in the army of Sacrificial Love, and cast away all com-

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plaining, all faithlessness, all mistrustfulness and faint-heartedness.

Lord Jesus, I am nothing ! That means I never expect anything ; never expect that any feeling that I could have would be acceptable to Jesus. Lord Jesus, I am nothing, Lord Jesus, I have nothing ! I never expect that the ordinary course of my life should be smooth, or that I should have sympathy, friendships and love, or even ordinary human joy, health or comforts. They aren't mine, I do not expect them, but I thank God when they come.

And above all things, if it were not for the dread of what might be in the next minute, I would like to say : I desire nothing but Thee and Thy love ! I would desire nothing, not even freedom from temptation—only Thee and Thy Love. We would all say this, wouldn't we ? Well then, let us leave the next minute to Him Who may never create it ! Let us leave it to Him Whose Almighty Power can modify and turn it to His own use ; and let us only regard Him Who draws our free-will by love. So we can bravely say :

I have nothing.

I am nothing.

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I desire nothing but Jesus and His Love, and if it be that love can never be perfected save through suffering and by the way of the Cross, then "Lord Jesus, keep Thy Hand upon me, lest I do Thee any harm."

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III

LET us contemplate our Lord in His solemn Joy in the Passion. "Now is My Soul troubled and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour : but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy Name." "Father, the hour is come ; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." Let us contemplate that which Jesus sees in His suffering, glorying in it. In the measure of His separation from earth, in the measure of His loneliness, He finds Himself glorifying His Father.

And let us contemplate Him as He is. "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the Angels stood round about the Throne, and about the Elders and the four beasts, and fell before the Throne on their faces, and worshipped God saying Amen, Blessing

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and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

"Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame."

Lord Jesus, I will follow Thee where-soever Thou goest. Lord Jesus, I am nothing, Lord Jesus, I have nothing, Lord Jesus, I desire nothing but Thee and Thy Love. Keep Thy Hand upon me lest I do Thee any harm.

THE JOY OF THE PASSION

For the keynote of our communions to-morrow let us take the Joy of the Passion : " Who for the joy endured the Cross."

Think about the joy of the Passion. We will divide it into two parts. There is the *present* joy, and there is the joy of the *future*. What is the present joy of the Passion ? No two of us would describe it in the same way. We can only venture suggestions.

First this : it is a joy of victory already won for us. Whatever doubt may sometimes assail us about future victory, however much we are sometimes troubled at the number of people who resist our Lord, yet we know, that as far as our own souls are concerned, a real victory over sin has been won for us, and it is our business to be loyal to our Captain Who has conquered, and to follow on over a battle-field through which Jesus has passed triumphant.

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We have behind us a sense of oblation once offered, of a Sacrifice sufficient for the needs of the whole suffering universe. And it is upon that we base our joy. There is so much now in the world that is already held in God's Hand. Think of the difference seen in the world between the year in which Jesus began His Ministry and the year in which they laid S. John to rest—a period of 70 years. Think of the change that came over the universe in those seventy years : the absolute revolution in the world that the coming of the Holy Ghost meant.

Now, that is behind you—*it is done*. Read the prophecies connected with the fall of Jerusalem and the end of that age, those wonderful and mysterious prophecies of our Lord, and realize that they were all fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost and fulfilled in that most extraordinary revolution when the Holy Ghost Himself simply turned this world upside down together with the supernatural world, and set free a force of which you and I have no realization. All this is behind us. *Our Joy* : the force is at work ; however long it tarry, however much it be resisted, it is

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there in its working, and *behind you*. It is done. That is the first joy.

Secondly, this comes home to me : the Passion gives me the joy of the Precious Blood. The joy of the Precious Blood ! We in England are so dull in our joy, aren't we ? We don't let ourselves go in joy over spiritual things, we think it hardly appropriate, and we miss a good deal, don't we ? The joy of the Precious Blood ! I suppose some of you would think it vulgar—but one memory I have from my early boyhood—I was about six—is of a Gospel Meeting, singing :—

“ Hallelujah, 'tis done,

“ I am saved by the Son,

“ I am washed in the Blood of the Crucified One.”

The words had no particular meaning to me then, but I remember a great marquee filled with people full of real joy, no one there who had brought anything to Jesus, no one who had come to bargain with Him, to kneel at His Feet with something to give—they had just crowded in and it was all done : they were saved by a free Gift. Now, vulgar as the lines may be, we

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can learn from them, can't we? Can we not come to our communions to-morrow morning absolutely joyful in the sense of being forgiven? I am saved by a free Gift! But so often our temptation is to spoil our joy by looking in upon ourselves. We come, some of us—most of us—at times to our Lord, trying to bring Him just some of the things that He has promised to give us. We worry ourselves with doubts about our confessions, we torture ourselves over our contrition and our repentance, whereas we ought to be simply singing "Hallelujah, it is done, I am saved by the Son, I am washed in the Blood of the Crucified One." Because He came in order to give us all these things, and granted good faith in us, Jesus does all the rest. We are saved by His Blood, His merits, His loving-kindness, and we do need to rejoice and be glad in His Precious Blood. So when we come to communion, it is possible to come expecting to please Jesus by the way in which we come, and it is no doubt a generous spirit: but let us come *joyful* in our *hunger* and in our *terrible need*. Don't misunderstand me; there is another side

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to it, but we need to emphasize this. Because Jesus is coming to us, we must be joyful, although entirely unworthy, and having nothing to give. "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord, Hosanna in the Highest" : "He filleth the hungry with good things" : "There were they in great fear, where no fear was." Let us rejoice, coming in absolute simplicity, bringing nothing but our complete faith and confidence in Him.

And then thirdly (and here we come back to our afternoon meditation, and I won't dwell on it again), there is the joy of the fellowship in His Sufferings. There is a simplicity of joy that comes to us when we feel that we have found a place in our Father's Household, and know that He is using us and our temptations, our sufferings, our struggles and pain : using all for the redemption of the Household from darkness and sin. There is some romance about it, if we can only get to that level of self-surrender.

More about *present joy*. There is the joy which comes from the confident foreknowledge of Jesus. In the Passion the Blessed Saviour, foreseeing our passage

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through death, has taken from death its sting. This is symbolical of the whole attitude of our Blessed Master to us always in our lives. Everything that happens to you or to me—everything that belongs to our lives—is foreseen by God, and in His Almighty Power it is measured and weighed according to our power of endurance ; from each thing that may overcome us, Jesus has extracted the uttermost bitterness—He has tempered the wind. This is what we so need to understand ; upon this we must base our prayer. The death of Jesus is not an isolated fact ; it touches everything. Jesus goes through each experience proper to the human race ; He touches each pain, each form of suffering, in order to extract from it all its worst, all its uttermost power over the children of God, and in each life He foresees what the world will do to His Father's child. He foresees the child's power of endurance, and it is in the child's own response to Jesus' Love, in his power of trusting Him, that his confidence in the foreknowledge of Jesus lies. This is the basis of joy.

There are many other reasons why we

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should rejoice in the Passion. We learn little by little. This one seems to me quite essential : we must believe in the victory that lies behind us ; we must rejoice like little children in the power of the Precious Blood ; we must try and enter into the joy of our fellowship in His Sufferings ; we must try and be pleased when our Father calls upon us to take our proper place in His Household ; and we must be confident that He knows exactly what is coming, and that nothing can ever happen to us that is not foreseen by Jesus, and in a sense tasted by Jesus, certainly measured by Him according to our power of endurance. This is the present joy upon which we can exercise ourselves in prayer.

Now of the future joy : for there is a future joy, and you shall have one or two texts which will remind you when you come to pray about it.

First : the promise given by our Lord in the Vision of S. John in Revelation, 17th verse of the second chapter : " To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new

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name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." That's the promised joy. The joy of a secret experience lies between yourself and your own Jesus. For what is the name He will give you? It is the name that He will give you in the end, just exactly expressing His knowledge of you and your relations with Him. It will exactly express the spiritual experience of your life in Jesus from the beginning. The carving of the name, the writing, is the expression by Jesus Himself of all that He knows in you of your secret endeavour, endurance, response, ministry, confidence, aspiration, humility, childlike acceptance of His merits and His Grace—suffering, acceptance of suffering, service, and ministry to others. He will find a name which exactly describes all that He has known in you, all that He has been to you, and all that you have been to Him. And all down the ages, to all eternity, that remains your secret, the secret between you and Jesus. What higher joy could Jesus offer to any one of us? What greater honour could He do us? Look up to the very Throne and see Jesus crowned, set upon the

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Throne, ordering the whole creation, and know that between you and the glorious Conqueror King on the Throne there is a secret link, the link of a great secret that no man knoweth save you and the King, a love which is just a little different from any other love that He bears to any other person. Isn't that joy? For the joy set before us we can endure!

Secondly, there is another thought. Rev. iii. 21: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His Throne." There in the words of Jesus Himself we have the confirmation of all that we have been saying about the sharing of the fellowship of His sufferings. It is not imagination, nor mere sentiment; it is a plain truth. You remember in the Book of Revelation two thrones are spoken of. There is the Throne of the Eternal Glory, called the Father's Throne—symbolical of the glory of the Godhead—the Glory of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the Glory that belongs to the Eternal Word in His own Essential Nature.

Then there is the second Throne, called

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the Throne of the Lamb, and it belongs to the Eternal Word in respect of His Manhood. That Throne is the centre of the worship of the Mystical Body, the Church. That Throne is as it were the Throne of the Priest, the great High Priest, Jesus, and it is round that Throne, and with Him Who sits in the Throne, that we shall behold the Beatific Vision, and it is promised to us that we shall have our place in that Throne. It means we shall really and truly share the Beatific Vision, and really and truly share in the power of Jesus, share His Kingdom, share His Glory. And it is because in His Mercy we are to be found fellow-victors with Jesus that we first must know the fellowship of His sufferings, and the power of His Resurrection. If then we are, however unworthy we may be, looking forward to a day in the dim future when, by whatever means of purification, we are to share with Him the Throne as fellow-conquerors, ought we not to be joyful, not as this earth counts joy, but with a true spiritual exaltation, as we share with Him His sufferings?

And then, lastly, the third promise, Rev. xxii. 3, 4, 5 : "And there shall be no

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more curse : but the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it ; and His servants shall serve Him ; and they shall see His Face ; and His Name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there ; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun ; for the Lord God giveth them light : and they shall reign for ever and ever.” There is the promise that our Sonship, our filial confidence in God in darkness here on earth, shall finally be crowned, that we shall spend eternity in a light of sacrificial love from which all pain has been removed, that we through painful paths and ways shall be lifted up into the Sacrificial Love that belongs to the Eternal. “ There shall be no night there,” and we shall serve Him, seeing His Face. Ah, if that is the promise, can’t we be content to live in the dark until He calls us ? Can’t we be content to serve Him without seeing His Face ? It is difficult, overwhelmingly difficult sometimes, but for the joy that is set before us cannot we endure ? “ I Jesus have sent mine Angel to testify unto you these things.” Can’t we trust Him ? Can’t we believe Him ? “ I am the Root and

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the Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star. And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." Come into the light, come into the service, come into the darkness of Sacrificial Love, because beyond it there lies the light which knows no cloud, beyond it is service in the full vision of the Eternal. For now, now present with you, unseen, unfelt, yet real, Jesus is present with you, Jesus, Whose whole Heart is filled with you, with your joys and your sorrows : He is coining for you in silence that name of Love, which to Him and to you shall ever speak of hidden struggles, of hidden love.

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I

LET us contemplate *God Who is Love.*

Let us contemplate Eternal Love before the Incarnation—His patience, His long endurance with the sins of men—His continual effort to touch the hearts of men.

Contemplate His joy in the Holy Prophets who responded to Him in their measure.

Contemplate all those in whom He was unable to waken a response until in Mary He found a home.

Let us adore the Eternal Love Who refused to be driven away—Who refused to give up His trust in man whom He had created.

Contemplate Eternal Love manifest in Jesus—His patience with His disciples—His endurance with their unbelief and sin—His refusal to let them go. Think of His patience with S. Peter—denied by S. Peter ; S. Peter, as it were, dead to the Divine Presence of Eternal Love, and

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Eternal Love refusing to be driven away.
“The Lord turned and looked upon Peter.” “The Lord hath appeared unto Simon—Simon Peter, lovest thou Me ? ”

Contemplate the patience of Eternal Love with doubting Thomas, refusing to be driven away by unbelieving Thomas.

Let us contemplate the victory of Eternal Love, Eternal Love triumphant, enthroned in the Sacred Manhood of Jesus, triumphant in the heart of His Mother Mary, triumphant in the hearts of the Saints.

O my God, I believe in Thee, Eternal Love. I confess before Thee mine unbelief. Father, I have doubted Thy Fatherhood and resisted Thy Love. I desire to love Thee. I desire to love Thee truly. I desire to love Thee only. I desire to love Thee above all other objects worthy of love.

O Love, I give myself to Thee,
Thine ever, only Thine to be.

GOD WHO IS LOVE

God is Love. Our faith begins with a mystery. We are thrown back upon the mystery of the Eternal Life of God Himself. For when we say that God *is* Love, that God's Love is personal, we are trying to explain that true love, Eternal Love, the fountain and parent of all love, is from its essential nature a social Love, a corporate Love. To put it into words isn't possible ; language does not exist in which to explain it. We can only reach out and touch it as we come near to God Himself. The best thought, the best effort of theologians, can get no further than this ; that the Lover, the fountain of love, and the object of love, the Beloved One, and the very activity of Love, is all one—the Eternal Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In our human minds we are bound to make human distinctions ; we think of the Eternal Father Who by His very Essence is the source of all Life, the source of the Godhead, as the Eternal Lover, always giving Himself out. And

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there is the Eternal Son, the very object of His Love, because He is one with Himself, equal with Himself, the Beloved One. And the activity of Love in which the Lover and the Beloved One are unified is the Person we call the Holy Spirit. We can't find any human analogy for it ; but we can guess a little, for we know human love that becomes one. We know a little of what we mean—the Beloved and a Lover becoming one. But whether we understand it or not, we fall back upon that revelation of Divine Love which God has given us. Love is personal—not a sentiment, not an emotion, but a living Person. When I speak of the Love of God I mean God Himself. And the external action of Eternal Love all down the ages has been through the Eternal Spirit. That is why S. Paul blesses the Corinthians in these words : “ The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all.” Because it is the Eternal Spirit Who is the very personal activity of Love ; it is the Spirit Who revealed Love in Creation ; it is the Spirit Who makes all those objects of Divine Love which we have round about

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us ; it is the Spirit Who created for Eternal Love these hearts of ours. We can't understand God's Love unless we make an act of pure Faith. We take it as a Truth. Love is a Living Person—that first.

Then, secondly, this. Eternal Love, however difficult and mysterious the statement may be, is perfectly simple and intelligible to us in the Heart of Jesus. All the riddles of theology become simple when we are alone with Jesus—for our Lord Jesus is Eternal Love, Eternal God Himself. Only He has clothed Himself in Manhood, so that in the new relationship that He has set up between Himself and us at the Incarnation, we should not be puzzled or perplexed. For in this new relationship He is to us always a human Heart, human Love, human Love that veils the Divine Love ; human Love, true and faithful, human Love made one with the Divine Love in the Person of Jesus. He has translated Divine Love into language that you and I can understand. Jesus Who went about doing good, Jesus the great Friend, Jesus the pitiful Teacher, Jesus the loyal Friend, the Shepherd Who

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laid down His Life for His sheep, Jesus, Living Personal Love, is the translation of Eternal Love. He gives you Himself through His Body and Blood ; He dwells in you—not as sentiment, not as an emotion, but substantially. He is Love ; Eternal Love made plain, intelligible, to you and to me. We may contemplate Him, Jesus of the Sacred Heart ; we may look up and look in, we may search into the secrets of the Sacred Heart. The Holy Spirit comes forth by way of this Sacred Heart, that He may move out to you and to me ; the Holy Spirit explains Love to us through the Heart of Jesus, that we may know, however dimly, Divine Love Himself. For Jesus has received Divine Love into His Human Heart, in the very fullest measure in which Humanity can ever receive Infinite and Eternal Love. On the other hand, as I gaze into the Heart of Jesus, it becomes clear to me that there is gathered up into the Heart of Jesus every real and true human love. And in this again the Spirit has His activity ; for gazing into the Heart of Jesus I can see that all the human love wherewith He loved His Father upon

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earth, all the human love with which He served men upon earth, is still gathered up in His Heart, and offered continually before the Father, by His very Presence before the Throne. It is the same Jesus, the Lover, the Shepherd, the Friend : the same Jesus, the Jesus of those nights of prayer and contemplation, the same Jesus, the same Lover living in glory for ever and ever. And I see added to that love all the love that the Spirit of Jesus has ever been able to create in the hearts of the children of Jesus : the love of the heart of Mary, the great love of S. Paul, S. John, S. Peter, all gathered into the Heart of Jesus—the Crown of our Race and our High Priest. There is not one human heart in the universe that has ever given out one sign of love in response to the Spirit that is not included in that Sacred Heart of Jesus before the Throne to-day.

Love is just that. Love is God : Love is the Spirit of God : and Love is every Christian who has come into the Heart of Jesus through Baptism and has learnt to live in the power of the Spirit in however feeble a way. Thus are Love Divine and human Love unified in the Heart of

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Jesus, Eternal Love, Son of God. God is Love.

And we pass on to another point, which is yet not another. We must emphasize this in our meditation that if God is Love, *Love is God*. Once and for all let us wipe out of our minds any conception of Love as being a sentiment or emotion, or of a feeling of happiness or sweetness. Happiness, sweetness, beautiful emotion and loving sentiment are the results of Love, and are sometimes present after Love has made its appearance ; but they are in no way Love. It is because we don't always understand that or, shall we say, won't remember it, that we get ourselves into quite wrong attitudes towards God. Food makes me ready to do my work, gives me a feeling of strength, gives me a comfortable feeling—but that is not my food, is it ? It is only the result of partaking of food. Food is a definite thing which may or may not be accompanied by those happy feelings. And I do beg of you as you contemplate the great mystery of Love, once and for all resolve not to be misled by any false view of Love. Love is a person.

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And now, pursuing that line of thought, remember this : we believe that God is Love and that He indwells all His creatures. The philosophers tell us that God is immanent in nature. S. Paul puts it in this way : " In Him we live and move and have our being." Every conceivable creature, however small, continues to exist on earth because it receives all that it is, and whatever it has, from God, and is set over against God as you might put a flower over against the sun. It is only when you come to deal with creatures that are possessed of free-will and self-consciousness that you understand how this life in the Presence of God extends to something of which you can only say that God indwells His creatures. Then you go a step further, keeping your mind fixed upon the Sacred Heart as the very centre of the redeemed universe. We are really and truly members of His Sacred Heart ; bone of His Bone, flesh of His Flesh. We have to consider men and women whose life's blood is no longer merely the blood that their parents gave them, but whose life's blood is the Life-Blood of Jesus, that He took from Mary

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His Mother. She is our Mother ; we receive spiritual life through her Son ; and in these people there is an indwelling of God that is beyond all comparison with His dwelling in His other creatures. There is an indwelling which is ineffable. It is no good trying to explain it : we can only shut our eyes and quiet our minds and contemplate the mystery.

Our love to God is not a sentiment, not an emotion, but real love to God *is* *ourself*. I am in the Presence of God and God is looking down upon me, and as I appear to God, I am no mere human creature, no mere son of Adam, *but* a child of Jesus, Son of Mary. And the new life of which Mary is the human Mother is in me, and I belong to a new order of things. I am on a level not merely human ; that is to say, the Living Blood that belongs to the Eternal Son is in me. And again, because I am linked up with the Eternal Son, and His Blood pours itself into me, the Holy Spirit of Love is in possession of me, however feebly my will responds to Him. The Holy Spirit is in me, unless I definitely bid Him depart. The Holy Spirit is in me, and I am myself so linked up with

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God, that when He asks for my love He asks for nothing less than the whole of myself. I am simply an individual taken by God up into the great movement by the Holy Spirit, through the Heart of Jesus, into the Bosom of the Eternal Father. Whether I am conscious of this uplifting or not, I am without a shadow of a doubt lifted up into that movement. When I say I love God, I don't mean that I have beautiful thoughts about God, I don't mean that I have a consciousness of the sweet Presence of God, I don't mean that I have any sense of sweet surrender to God : these things may or may not be with me. What I do mean is just this : I myself am not my own, I am in the possession of the Holy Spirit, Who is Love, and I am what I am because Jesus has taken me and made me His own, to bring me to His Father, and has made me a partaker of His life. When I say that I love God, I simply mean that I myself am in the movement that is going back into the Bosom of the Father.

God is in me substantially through my union with Jesus, and however feeble and unworthy I am, however prone to fall into

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sin, I am in Jesus ; I am in the movement of the Holy Spirit that is going back to the Bosom of the Father.

In the next place there follows this. There are certain essential principles which govern the life of one who is in this movement of Love. Let us think of them, and you will notice they have nothing to do with sentiment, nor emotion, nor that side of our nature at all.

First, there must be obedience. There must be obedience that is a struggle. Please don't think that the first principle is perfection. " This is a true saying and worthy of all men to be received that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." The beginning of the movement which carries us back to Him Who is Eternal Love finds us sinners. We love God because He first loved us while we were sinners. Christ was content to suffer for us, that in the end He might grant us the perfection to which we were struggling. Each one has a different duty. No two of us are alike. For this movement back into the Heart of God is the movement of the universe, the movement of the whole human race ; and each individual

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brings something different from what his neighbour brings. No man can say what is the duty of his neighbour ; all that we can say is, that if we would in any sense try to respond to the Holy Spirit and be what the Holy Spirit would like us to be ; if we would finally attain to the Bosom of the Father, we must each one of us think out in our heart of hearts what exactly our duty means. Roughly speaking, it ought to mean for each of us a certain sense of discipline ; we ought to have an outline by which to rule our lives. I don't think personally that it is much use making a great big rule of life. People who live in the world don't want a very long detailed rule of life ; but we ought to have some sort of rule of life that is real, and we ought to make it, not because we have a passion for making rules, but because we want to learn to do our duty.

I know that God Who is Love is within me, and I know that if I am not careful to struggle to do my duty, I shall not give Him the opportunity He needs of making Himself and His Love known to me, of making me see Him, of making His Love triumphant in me. I should make a simple

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rule in order to give God a chance of speaking to me. I must decide not to frivol my time away. I won't give in to slackness about my prayer time ; nor give up going to the Sacraments, or to worship. Looking up to Jesus with adoring love, looking up and seeing all His Love, I will say : " O Love, I give myself to Thee, and I will make it possible for Thee to influence me more in my coldness and weakness, and therefore I will keep a certain Rule of Life."

The second principle is this : we must exercise our desire for Love. That is what the spiritual books mean when they write about detachment and about mortification. If we have a desire to know the Love of God, and some day to be conscious of the Love of God, we must take pains to make that desire known to Him, and give Him a real chance of satisfying our desire. It is no good pretending that we desire the Love of God, if we are entirely attached to all kinds of things in no way compatible to God. Unless human love at its highest is a base thing, it is presumably a revelation of God's love for us, and of the desire of the Lover for His

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Beloved. It is an all-consuming desire. It detaches me from everything else in the universe. It is a picture which Scripture itself uses of the relation between the soul and God : " My beloved is mine and I am His." But you will answer : " Oh, but we haven't those feelings "—to which I respond : it is not a matter of feelings—*it is a matter of will*. You may say to me : I haven't got this love and desire : I don't find that these beautiful forms of speech come naturally to me. I desire God, but I can't look up and say with truth : " My beloved is mine." But He has not asked you to. He asks you *only* to exercise your desire for Him. I *desire to desire* Jesus—we all can go as far as that—and because I desire that, some day I may really desire Him. I am going to look out upon my life and criticize it, I am going to see what there is in my life that quite obviously interferes with my union with the Love of God, and I will detach myself from it, I will cut myself off from it. I will so learn to regard the world and the things of the world, that if my use of the world and the things of the world give me a great satisfaction apart from God, if I find myself

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perfectly comfortable and happy without God, then I will begin to mortify myself, and arrange that I shall not be happy and comfortable, or allow myself to be at ease, without God. At least I can do this : I can empty my heart. I cannot conjure up beautiful thoughts, I cannot always have nice feelings, but I can see to it that the heart is empty. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols"—these are practical words of S. John, after his wonderful description of God's Love. This is what we mean by mortification. It doesn't mean aiming at asceticism for the sake of being ascetics, nor living in the world as if you were Religious in the protection of a convent, nor trying to live a very hard life for its own sake. But it does mean that you must keep your hearts from idols, not letting anything get such a power over you that you can be comfortable without God. We must exercise the *desire for the desire*, not because humanly speaking we like doing it, but because supernaturally we have had a dim vision of the possibility of union with Love Who is God, and we are going with all our power to try to desire it.

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The third principle is Prayer—watch and pray.

Prayer is filial waiting upon our Father. If I say that my prayer is a lifting up of my heart into God, I shall speak the exact truth in the sense I should like to use it, but it is a phrase open to danger. Lifting the heart unto God is exactly what I mean by waiting upon the Father ; if we remember that Love is a Person and that my love is my person. A person uplifted to a Person, that is all right, but if the uplifting of the heart is supposed to be something of a sentimental feeling or emotion, then we get wrong in our definitions. Call it a filial waiting upon God our Father : that is the essential thing in prayer, in our relation to God Who is Love. We should be always waiting, always expecting, and if we regard our prayers from this point of view, things become so much more simple. They don't become easy but simple, because we know that all we have to do, the minimum we have to do, is to correspond with this movement of the Holy Spirit going back into the Bosom of the Father. We go to our prayers not pretending we have brought

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anything to the Father ; we dare not ask selfishly from Him ; but we simply yield ourselves to the movement of the Spirit which is carrying us all back into the Heart of Jesus, into the Bosom of the Father. When I pray, I do not know what I shall be able to do, or say or think, or whether I shall feel sweetness, or whether He will give me light or darkness, and I *don't care* or ought not to care, because I am a person waiting upon a Person. It is enough that the Eternal Love sees me there, enough for me to know that the Eternal Love knows I am there. I am there just like a little child waiting upon His Father's pleasure. I am there absolutely for God's Glory. I am there giving my will into this movement Godward, quite determined that I shall be found in my place in the Heart of Jesus, waiting, but altogether detached from sweetness and consciousness of God's Presence, unless He wills to give it to me ; detached from everything easy and pleasant and happy in the spiritual regions ; detached from everything, simply intent on waiting upon God.

And now we see, don't we, why S. Paul

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insisted that it is by grace we are saved ? God does everything, just everything, by His grace. It is His Goodness to us : we are recipients. Now you know what our Lord means when He says, " Blessed are the poor in spirit." I am a pauper. We are paupers before God, we are there simply to struggle to do His Will, we are there to show Him our desire for Him and we are there to glorify His Name by our presence, bringing nothing to Him. We have no right to ask for anything except that His Holy Will be done.

And will you take this, not as a last point of meditation, but as a warning. There is a very important warning needed when we meditate upon Love as a coming to a Person, and when we meditate on our own love as a movement in the Spirit through the Heart of Jesus back to the Bosom of the Father. It is borne in upon us that the Love which dwells in us and moves back to God does not go direct, but passes to God through the hearts of other people. As there is a unity of Love in the Blessed Trinity, Three in One and One in Three, so here in the very Mystical Body there must be a unity of love, a Society of

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those who love God and who love one another. Take this warning then : it is no good kneeling before God hoping that your love which is yourself will reach Him in the Holy Spirit, if you are conscious that there is anybody at all in the world through whose heart your love for God cannot pass. Maybe there is a barrier between you and that person. That is why we are bidden to pray : "forgive us . . . as we forgive them."

Maybe you are failing in the life of brotherhood. That is why we are warned : "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me."

My God and my All. O Love, I give myself to Thee : Thine ever, only Thine to be.

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II

LET us contemplate the Glory of God in the face of Moses in his prayer : “ And it came to pass when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the Mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him.”

Let us contemplate the Mercy of Almighty God ; the gift vouchsafed to Moses, the union between Moses and God of which Moses’ face is the evidence.

And Moses was unbaptized, in great imperfection, yet with an earnest will to do God’s Will, with a deep trust in God’s pity.

Contemplate blessed S. John in his prayer—“ I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation,

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and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a great Voice as of a trumpet saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last."

Contemplate again the Mercy of Almighty God in the wonderful comfort vouchsafed to S. John in his sufferings and in his prayer.

Then let us contemplate the true Christian prayer, the prayer of Man in suffering, of Man bearing the penalty of sin : " And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " " Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit."

O my God, I confess before Thee my failure in prayer. I have not trusted Thee, I have not trusted Thy Power. Nor have I come to Thee empty and hungry ; but with pride and self-conceit have I come before Thee. I have not trusted Thee to give me all. I have dared to think to offer something to Thee. I have taken all the sweetness of my life and refused the bitter. I bewail before Thee my idleness,

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my irregularity, my weakness of will, the deadness of my desire. O my God, I pray Thee pardon me. Give me the power of Thy Holy Spirit from to-day that I may begin to live for Thee. Give me confidence in Thee ; grant me Thy light in my darkness, and if the Light may not shine in me, grant me Thy protection through the darkness. Hear me, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PRAAYER

Let us think practically about prayer. For our union with the Love of God, and our hope of the Vision of God in the end, must depend upon our loyalty to God in our prayer. There are certain things about prayer that it is good to be reminded of in Retreat. There is nothing new, but there is a great deal that is old to be said, and I would remind you and myself too of it, point by point, quite simply.

First. What is the basis of prayer? I suppose the best thing to say is, that the basis of prayer is a deliberate choice of God, and the rejection of what is not God. That in the widest sense is the ground of our prayer. You can divide the world up roughly into those who pray and those who don't pray. Apart altogether from our particular views about institutions of Religion, mankind is roughly divided into two: those who pray and those who don't—those who have deliberately chosen God as their highest good, and those who are finding their highest good in their

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fellow-creatures. If we follow out that thought of the basis of prayer, it is strange how it helps us to approach our life of prayer regularly and sincerely. If prayer is the choice of God, then every time I have an opportunity of exercising my choice and proving my choice, it ceases to be a question of whether I am inclined to pray or in the mood for prayer. Prayer essentially is an adequate expression of a choice. Inwardly one hopes to co-operate with the choice, but in a sense it is external. There is a deliberate movement of breaking off from the things of sense and getting oneself into position to pray, parting with created things for a few minutes, setting oneself opposite to God, learning to regard one's prayer times as opportunities of proving to God, and of shewing to all the spiritual powers one's own deliberate choice. That in itself is a help. But beyond that, if one could look upon one's prayer as a deliberate choice of God and a rejection of the world, I think one would be saved from all exaggerated notions about prayer. There is so much danger of associating prayer with feelings, and I don't think one can too often protest

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against that. When I kneel down to pray it is an act of *will*, primarily, it is not an act of the affections. The affections may follow the will : they may be there, but they may be so dead that they refuse to follow the will. But I make an act of will, a deliberate choice for God, and a Rule of Prayer loyally kept in a time of great deadness of spirit, in weariness of soul, is an offering worth making and has its value. It is in a true sense an offering to Almighty God, and is a deliberate choice of God. That, then, is what is the end of all prayer—a deliberate choice of God. Whether we go and throw ourselves in with the great offering of prayer in the public services of the Church, linking ourselves with those in earth and Heaven who have chosen God, or whether it is in private secret prayer, the value of our prayer in God's sight is, that with our wills, without any encouraging feelings of happiness, joy or anything of the kind, we are choosing Him. " O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh also longeth after Thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." *There* I am choosing God.

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Now isn't there some comfort for us in that? Zacchæus was in the tree top, unknown as he thought to Jesus. His presence in the tree top was his deliberate choice, and his prayer was heard, not for what he thought, not for what he said, but for the act of his will. Mary, the sinner, in the face of a whole multitude, anointing the feet of Jesus, saying nothing, having nothing in her heart but the conviction of her terrible need, and her confidence in Jesus, Mary is heard because of her deliberate choice. That, then, is the basis of prayer.

Then, secondly, what is the object of prayer? Shall we begin with negations? The object of prayer is *not* to get what we want necessarily : not that we should be lifted up to that degree of spiritual satisfaction that we have imagined for ourselves: not that we be relieved from the pressure of burdens that are on us. The only true object of prayer is that our will shall be on the side of the Father's Will, come what may. I am not praying as a subject before his King ; I am not praying as a pauper before a rich man ; I am praying as a son who has glimpses of his Father's

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purpose ; and feeble as I am, sinful as I am, desolate as I am, yet really and truly, deep down in me, what I really want is that the Father's Will shall be accomplished. I daren't say it in so many words, because my companions would rise up against me and throw in my teeth the inconsistencies that they know of, my breaches of the Father's Will : yet deep down in my heart, in my will, there, at the back of everything, is a dim desire not only that the Father's Will shall be accomplished, but that I shall be allowed to co-operate with Him. And this is the object of prayer. This is the real truth. We press forward to whatever troubles, burdens, or sorrows may become our lot, to whatever our imagination may tell us of the possibilities of the future. And however much our hearts may be wrung by the sorrows of those round about us, as loyal sons and daughters we trust our Father's Will ; we pray in order that the strength of our wills may be on the side of our Father's Will. " And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly, Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not My Will, but Thine be done."

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Then, thirdly, what is the essence of Prayer? The surrender of our will to our Father's. Of course, there are a multitude of ways of praying, but they are all one in this. We set out from our unconverted life filled with a multitude of divers thoughts and emotions, feelings and desires. The effort of prayer is the bringing of our whole life and all its interests and all possible objects under the rule of one lord, and that lord is our own will. My life is to become a unity under the authority of my will, and that done, my will is to be yielded to my Father's Will, so that my life becomes a unity in God. It is in that way the whole universe will become a unity in God, and God shall be all in all.

The surrender of my will is the essence of prayer and, because it is the essence, round it all the difficulties of prayer gather. People tell me they cannot pray because they cannot surrender their wills. That is like saying you cannot eat because you are hungry. The essence of prayer is the surrender of your will, and the process of prayer is the effort to surrender your will. It may take you your lifetime to get your will perfectly surrendered, and the last

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prayer you say at the moment of death may be your first perfect surrender, but the prayers you say through your lifetime are leading up to that perfect surrender. The absolutely necessary prayer, without which we can conceive of no salvation, is this : that in the moment that you die and meet Jesus face to face, you offer Him your will. Now, no one wants to go into the Presence of Jesus to make for the first time that surrender of will. It is of His Mercy that it is sufficient : it is not what we desire—we desire to do that here.

Don't lose heart about prayer. Remember that the whole of life is a Sacramental Union ; it is the period within which we are to unify all our desires, feelings, passions, everything, under one will, and give them with our will into God's keeping. Well now, we try day after day, hour after hour ; we have been trying for years ; we will go on trying for years ; and we know that our labour is not in vain. It cannot be in vain, because we are dealing with our Father. Would you, with all your feeble, selfish human love, be hard upon a little child to whom you explained how she should always behave before you, if every

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day, several times a day, she fell short of what you told her to do, when all the time you could see that, deep down within her, she was struggling and trying to adapt herself to you? And can the Father of Love be hard on His children if He sees that they are trying? What is really true of most of us, I suppose, is that we give half an hour or an hour to prayer, and it sometimes takes the whole time before we get our will surrendered: one minute of surrender out of an hour; yet the remaining fifty-nine minutes are valuable to God, because God measures the surrender by the pains that it takes you to make it. The fifty-nine minutes of struggle with yourself proves the value of the one minute of personal surrender at the end of prayer. And if it takes you thirty days, and the whole month looks like lost prayer, and at the end of the thirty days for a moment or two you reach real surrender, that *is* its value—because of the thirty days past. It is all a matter of will, and God alone can judge the will.

Then in the next place there is the happiness of prayer. What is the happi-

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ness of prayer? Without doubt it is a foretaste of the Vision of God. Sometimes, and perhaps very rarely with some of us, perhaps never in our past experience, but sometimes in prayer, the Living Person Who is in us, and Whose Presence in us makes it possible to pray, seems to fill our heart : we have the consciousness of the Presence of God, of which nothing on earth can make us doubt. It may be for a few seconds, it may last a few minutes, it may go with us after our prayer time, and last a day or two, or for many days : then it disappears again. It is the foretaste of Heaven. Why God gives it to us, who can say? One thing is certain, we don't deserve it ; one thing is certain, that nothing that we can do can compel God to give it to us. It is certain we must not ask for it, it is certain we must not rely upon it—because we were not sent here to be happy, but to love God. We are made happy by doing God's Will, and the real and true eternal happiness is for us when we reach the Father's country, and dwell in the Father's House. We must thank God for it when such joy does come. We must not be jealous if it is not given to

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us but is given to others. We must always remember that that kind of happiness is often given to weaklings rather than to strong people. It is given in God's Providence to those who perhaps otherwise would lose heart ; to those whom God sees to be in need of comfort ; and sometimes it is given to prepare the soul for a great sorrow. Sometimes that sense of God's Presence is almost a certain warning of a blow that is going to fall upon us, or of a spiritual trial. The Father makes us ready by bracing up our will to bear with Him the trials we have to face. It is the Father seeing the child in circumstances that are going to hurt it. The Father cannot save the child from the circumstances that are going to hurt it, because He wants the child to help to redeem the circumstances. So He braces the child's will by some dim vision of Himself, and the child gets just the strength that he needs : and then the darkness comes and the child remembers the vision, and comes triumphant through the darkness, undismayed.

You know how a great many of the Saints were for years and years of their

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lives in perfect coldness, without any happiness in prayer. You could not imagine S. Francis being for two whole years in darkness, yet he was, and it ended later on in the Stigmata.

Then in the next place, let us consider the joy of prayer. We distinguish between happiness and joy. There is joy apart from happiness in prayer. And what is the joy? It is the joy of waiting upon the Father's good pleasure, the joy of knowing that you are in your right place and doing what the Father wants you to do. Just because He is our Father, and we are in His Household, He has for each one of us a place and a work in which we are capable of a certain consciousness that we are of use to Him. Isn't that joy? There is nothing selfish about it. We aren't asking anything from our God except that we be of use, each in his own place. We have the joy of sons in their Father's household.

In the next place we must discuss a little the method of our prayer. Of course one can say very little, and what I am going to say is designed entirely for busy people. I mean, I would put before you a very common method of prayer, and

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recommend it strongly unless you are in any way being brought up to use other methods which suit you better. There is a method of prayer which has many names, but roughly speaking we will call it "Acts of the Will." It is a method of praying which is independent of our thoughts and convictions and feelings, really a matter of the will. It is like this. A man has made his preparation for prayer, and humbled himself before God, and seen that he comes to God without any self-conceit, or any thought that he is going to do anything in prayer. He has humbly confessed his unworthiness, and implored the strength of the Holy Spirit. He then tries to find perhaps in the Bible, perhaps in the Crucifix, perhaps in the mysteries of the Gospel, some thought on which for two or three minutes he lets the mind dwell. When he has got hold of some dominant thought and feels that that is what God gives him, he uses that for a peg, and on the peg hangs the acts that he would make with his will. He simply compels himself with his will to speak to God, and make acts of faith in Him. He says to Him all that he has

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to say centred round that dominant thought—in acts of hope, charity, penitence of confession, of utter unworthiness, of self-consecration ; acts of intercession that fit in with that dominant thought ; so that every two or three minutes he approaches the dominant thought from a different point of view. He doesn't grow weary of it. If he does so pray with the will, not caring if the mind lags behind the will, or if the heart be heavy, but just compelling himself to do it, time will pass extraordinarily quickly and not hang so heavily on his hands as it does sometimes. And he will find at the end he has won a victory, and that he has made his will do something against its own inclinations ; and for busy people that is a wonderfully good form of prayer. The two or three minutes at the beginning, thinking of something, is just like shutting a door on the outside world, and using one's will in the Presence of God. For one busy, using the will possibly all day long, to go into the Presence of God and use it in the Presence of God is an admirable method with none of the dangers of meditation. Meditation is quite admirable

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in its own way, but there are dangers, and the dangers are two. First, it may become a mental exercise for thinking things out; secondly, it often ends without real speaking to God.

Try to make acts of the will with no words. Speak to God without words. Let your heart interpret your will. God can read the heart. And if you use words, first make an act of faith, in your own words, even if you don't pronounce them, yet using them. Then stop and try to feel you are trusting God's power, and then go on to acts of hope and acts of will.

Then if I may go on, there is another point to be remembered : make a note of *Recollection*. This mental prayer and these Acts of the Will have their own proper fruit, and the fruit is Recollectedness. But the fruit doesn't grow and develop unless it is cared for, and we ought to practise a little recollection. Now recollection is a very difficult thing to define. Roughly speaking I think we should agree in this, that there is a sort of subconscious sense of the Presence of God lying behind the activities of life. I don't know whether this is a very rough

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way of putting it. Supposing that one has a sick person upstairs requiring fairly constant attention, and one is downstairs with other people and enjoying oneself, yet all the while subconsciously one is aware of the sick person upstairs, never quite free of recollection of him, at once all alert if one hears anything upstairs, or hears anything to disturb the sick person, yet taking a normal part in life around one. This power is raised to its highest degree and put to its truest use when we become recollected in the Presence of God. This fruit of prayer cannot be in any sense forced. Some people are so silly as to try and show it in their faces. It is priggish to try and look recollected. It makes us become self-conscious. We must let the prayer grow its own fruit. But we must tend the fruit. And surely the best way to tend that fruit is to get into a habit of making ejaculatory prayer, of talking definitely to our Lord at different times throughout the day. That does indeed help towards recollectedness.

Lastly, we must say just a word about the difficulties of prayer, and the difficulties roughly speaking are two.

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First, distractions. I think the truest way to put it briefly is this : what we, the children of God, have to learn is that in facing distractions in prayer we are on the side of our Father. Our Father entirely understands the difficulties because He has given us the task. It is the Father Who willed that we, living in a sinful world, in a busy world, should become His temples. He knows the exact difficulty, and He sent us to redeem our minds in prayer. If it is difficult, and if it is marked by many failures, and is sustained by an interior struggle, we are giving the Father all He expects. Don't let us worry ourselves, so long as we go on struggling against distraction. Let us be quite certain that our Father is with us, watching and helping us in the struggle, and that He values the prayer for the struggle against distraction. That is what gives it its true meaning in His sight. Of course I know that sometimes we are idle, lazy, and don't try. I am not talking about that. We are not to be afraid of all these multitudinous distractions that dog our steps. We are not to be afraid of them, for we are looking at them as the Father looks at them. The

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Father has thrown us into the distracting world, bidding us redeem it by our prayer, and go on facing the difficulties to the end of our lives. Slowly our will becomes purer, our desire stronger, and distractions lose their power over us. Thus little by little prayer becomes what the Father means it to be. Never get downhearted about distractions. Some of them are the result of past sin, but that is forgiven. Some are a penance which the Father wants us to bear. Some are due to the world ; some are due to the wiles of Satan.

The second thing that seems to be in this class of difficulties is darkness. What shall we say about darkness? I say to myself this ; I don't know whether it will appeal to you. First, there is no promise of light until I reach a certain union with God through my will. It is absurd to suppose that at the beginning of the spiritual life we are going to be set free from the darkness that belongs to this world, and which has so much in common with the will inside. I must not be in a hurry. I must not expect to win victories before I have really fought a battle. Again, I say to my soul this :

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There is a great deal of darkness due to me because of my past, and every time that I refuse to pray when I ought to pray, I am really adding to the chances of darkness. This is perfectly true. Darkness is a penance, but when I have said that, I must go on to say there is another kind of darkness, through which God is testing me. He shuts off some beams of light from my mind, He turns off some warm rays of His Love from my heart and He watches my will to see what it will do. Has it power to join itself with Jesus? "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Until the will learns to cry like that, God may very well keep the mind and heart in darkness. He loves me well enough to leave me in darkness until I have learnt my lesson. There is that kind of darkness : it is the darkness of Gethsemane. The will of Jesus was proved to the uttermost on the Cross, and my will is proved in union with His will.

There is yet another kind of darkness, the darkness that comes after old and before new light. The soul for the love of God begins to renounce herself, mortifies herself, lives under discipline ; and the good

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Father in His kindness grants power and a measure of light, sweetness, and happiness. She makes great advance on these lines. Then the Father hides Himself and the soul finds no visible tangible props in God. She looks back to the world, to the things that once propped her up, and she finds that they are cut off. She has cut them off herself, and she daren't go back, nor is it her desire to go back. All things from which she had mortified herself are gone. And God has removed the props which He had given her at first, to test her. So she stands there before the Father, seeing nothing that can help her ; she stands there fearing to fall. Darkness closes in upon her. She remains trembling, overwhelmed by the darkness, until by the grace of God she can accept the darkness and refuse to be afraid. In the moment that she has the courage to trust the Invisible Father, and to laugh at the darkness, a new vision is vouchsafed to her, and God is able to give her a foretaste of real union with Himself. The soul passes to higher joys of prayer, to a closer union with the Father, and really and truly has some knowledge of true light.

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There is no kind of darkness that need frighten us. If it is our own fault, then the Father of Jesus will turn it into a penance. If it be the testing of our will by the Cross, His Cross is our comfort. If it be this periodical testing of the soul, preparing it for new light, why "though I pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy Rod and Thy Staff comfort me."

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III

LET us contemplate Almighty God, hiding Himself from the people of Israel, His chosen people : “And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day : for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves that ye go not up into the Mount, or touch the border of it : whosoever toucheth the Mount shall be surely put to death. And Moses said unto the Lord, The people cannot go up to Mount Sinai : for Thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the Mount, and sanctify it lest He break forth upon them.”

Let us contemplate the darkness of our vision as far as we are out of Jesus.

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Then contemplate the promise of Jesus Himself : " Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

O my God, unworthy as I am, I do desire to love Thee, I desire to love Thee truly, I desire to love Thee above all other things. I desire to be Thine, only Thine, in all singleness of heart and purity of will. O my God, I long to see Thee. Grant me, for Jesus' sake, to persevere unto the end. Grant me Thy Holy Spirit all the days of my life : bring me to the place where I would be. Hear me, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THE VISION OF GOD

Let us meditate upon the vision of God :
“ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

The first thing that stands out clearly in our thoughts about the vision of God is that no man cometh to the Father but through Jesus ; that no man hath seen God at any time but the only-begotten Son in the Bosom of the Father. He hath revealed Him, and without controversy the first vision of God is in the Heart of Jesus. The Eternal Son, taking into Himself the human mind, the human will, the human heart, the whole nature of man, made Himself to be the mirror in which is reflected all that manhood can ever see or know or taste of the Godhead. In the mirror of the Heart of Jesus, Eternal God beholds Himself in the measure of the Manhood of Jesus. How can we understand ? There are people we have met, there are people whom we have read about, whose faces seem to speak of Jesus, whose faces speak to us

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of God. Is it then really hard to believe that the Perfect Manhood of the Son of Mary, which never existed for a moment outside the Eternal Word of God, is the mirror of the Divine Glory and of the Divine Love? The true Babe, born of Mary, offers to God His Manhood as the most perfect mirror for the reflection of the Eternal Godhead in human measure.

Into the Mirror God looks and, beholding His own Glory reflected, is satisfied. Into that Mirror the human race also looks. Into the Heart of Jesus the Mystical Body looks—the Society of Jesus, the Church, the Society of the Redeemed, the citizens of the Kingdom—into that Heart they all look, and they in their turn reflect in their hearts what is in the Heart of Jesus, God and the Glory of God.

Only of course each separate human heart reflects only a little. Each heart according to its measure and in its own degree sees part of the whole Vision, and reflects part of the whole Vision. The whole Society, the whole Family, together is needed to see the whole Vision of the Heart of Jesus, and it is in the hearts of the whole company of Heaven together

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that the Glory of God is reflected as in the Heart of Jesus. Eternal God looking down upon the Mystical Body sees His own Glory and Holiness reflected to Him in measure and in degree.

Our Mother Mary reflected from the Heart of Her Son the glory that belongs to the Godhead. It was manifested in her heart, she reflected it in her heart, and Eternal God gazing into the heart of Mary sees His own Holiness, His own Glory, in a measure, as it were reflected from the Heart of Jesus.

And what is true of her is one day to be true of us, in our measure and in our degree. Let us dwell on this for our comfort, let it inspire us with hopefulness. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This then is the beginning of the Beatific Vision.

In the second place consider this : That what we see in the Heart of Jesus, and what we reflect in our own hearts, is God, and God in us. God in us is a real Presence ; that is where the analogy fails. When I look into a mirror and hold any object up to the mirror, it only reflects the image. But of God there is no image that is not

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God-Eternal; God in the Heart of Jesus; God received into the heart of the member of Christ ; God in Manhood and God in me. It is the real Presence of God that is in my heart : it is the Beatific Vision Himself. This Presence of God in me which the Heart of Jesus makes possible to me, how do I really receive it ? How do I become one with it ? How does each member of the Mystical Body learn his own secret of the Love and of the Holiness of God ?

Well now, we think in this way : That God Who is in my heart, God Who from the Heart of Jesus finds Himself with me, is a living Person, and I am over against Him—a person against a Person. And union with a person, in however small a degree it may be, involves three things. First of all, my whole heart. It is the whole heart, the whole personality of a man receiving into his personality that of his friend, becoming of one interest with his friend, of one love with his friend. Is not that a little of what we mean by union of heart with heart ? That explains it a little. In human language we talk of two becoming one. We understand the

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union between two human beings, that becomes so close that for all practical purposes they become one.

What shall it be between me and God ? If it is true to say of my present life, " that the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," what shall it not be in that day in which my manhood is purified from every motion of sin, and related to nothing that is not entirely in the service of God ? But in order to that, with a view to that, there are other two things to be considered. My personality stands over against that of God, seeing Him through the Heart of Jesus, coming into contact with Him in the Heart of Jesus. It puts out two things in order to grip hold of God ; one thing is my *will* and the other is my *mind*. The two eyes of my soul with which it will see God in the Day of Glory are the *will* and the *mind*. And the whole personality puts out its will, it puts out all the forces of its mind, and arrives at true union with God.

Just think of these two things a little—will and mind—the instruments which my personality uses in order to lay hold of God.

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The will first. Why must I use my will ? Why is prayer so important ? As we have already seen, prayer is the expression of a surrendered will. There can be no union between God and me if we are not absolutely of one will. I see God in as far as I know the moral nature of God, in as far as I entirely approve of and sympathize with the moral nature of God. But if I find God's moral nature intolerable to me, if I find it hostile to my own way of action, can there ever be union ? So by my will I deliberately choose that moral nature of God, and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, I try to bring it under the Will of God, which is Holiness. As I grow in likeness to God's Will through each struggle, as hereafter in His waiting place relieved from temptation I shall develop in my true life of holiness, I shall be found so much of one will with God, that it will be true to say that I know God. I shall see His Holiness in me because it is triumphant in me, and has made my will His. This is the union of the will. If only I could remember it in times of darkness and temptation ! If only I could remember that Satan comes to the soul because of the

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supreme fact that God is now living in me, that his temptations are because of God, that temptations are opportunities of choosing God, and all that remains is to persevere until my will becomes so much like His that He triumphs in me, unveiling His Holiness within me !

And, secondly, there is the likeness of *mind*. Who hath known the mind of God ? S. Paul answers : “ We have the mind of Christ.” With the mind I set out to look for God. The hope that we all have is, that in that great day, the day of Christ’s glory, when God gathers us all in, we shall be found having nothing at all in our minds except God : God, and the things of God : and that all our thoughts about creation and about ourselves shall be God-given thoughts, so that we shall actually have one mind with God. His Mind is without measure, universal : my mind is small and particular, covering so little ground. And yet in so far as it covers any ground at all, it will really have the thoughts that God thinks, and become one mind with God’s, so that having God’s purpose, God’s plans, and God’s methods as mine own, I shall see God with an

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inward vision that is a perfect vision. That is why it is so worth while here on earth to go on fighting and struggling. I don't really think that anything matters so long as in the hour of my death God may find me entirely dissatisfied with my mind and longing for His.

God is here. He really does dwell within me. He really does love me, works with me, and whether here and now or in the dim future, the promise holds true : "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Take this promise in the very fullness of its comfort. For it holds good not only for the perfect saint or for sheltered and elect souls. The promise holds good for such as have to struggle here in a busy life, for those who have to struggle for every moment of their lives, for those burdened and crushed down under the sense of their sin : "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And if anyone say, "I am not pure in heart," to such an one the Saviour answers : "Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." "The Spirit and the Bride say come, and let him that heareth say

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come ; and let him that is athirst come.
. And to him that overcometh will
I give to eat of the Tree of Life which is in
the midst of the Paradise of God.
And His servants shall serve Him, and
they shall see His Face, and God shall wipe
all tears from their eyes.”

THE END



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